











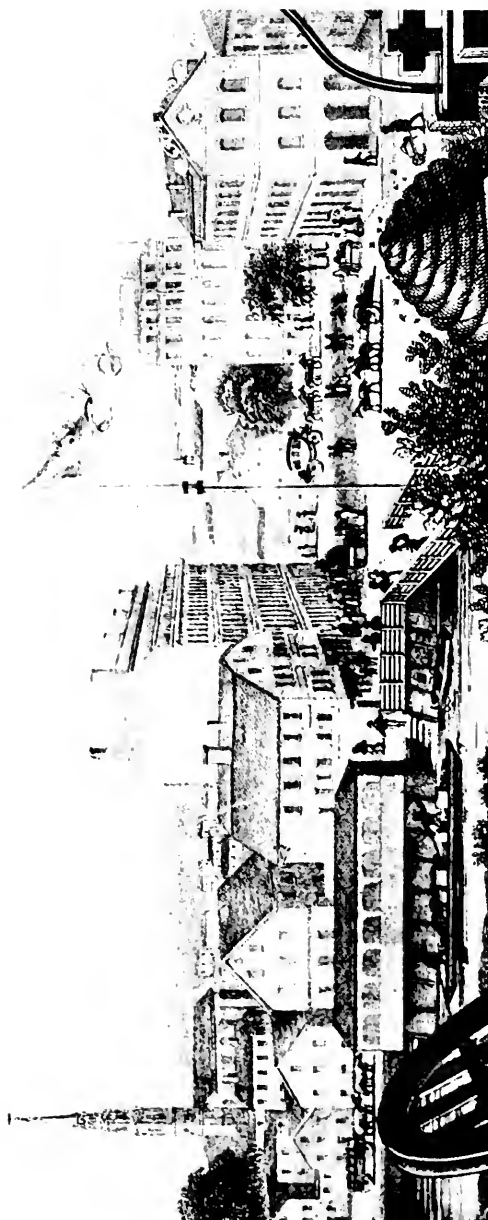




## PROVIDENCE IN COLONIAL TIMES







#### VIEW OF MARKET SQUARE

Showing the First Baptist Meeting-house on the left, the old "Coffee House" in the centre, and the old Market House on the right. This is the earliest view of the square, and is taken from the diploma of the Providence Association of Mechanics and Manufacturers. It was drawn about 1824.





# PROVIDENCE IN Colonial Times

By GERTRUDE SELWYN KIMBALL  
*With an introduction by J. Franklin Jameson, LL.D.*

ILLUSTRATED



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## Introduction

**G**ERTRUDE SELWYN KIMBALL, the writer of this book, was born on January 29, 1863, at Blackstone, Massachusetts, the child of Henry Clay Kimball and Elizabeth Fairbrother Farnum his wife. Both parents were of the old New England stock, the father an intelligent manufacturer, of Rhode Island descent, the mother a refined and studious woman, partly of Quaker origin, versed in French and Italian literature to a degree unusual in Massachusetts villages in that day. The mother died early. The daughter's education was in her earlier years obtained at the hands of a devoted aunt. An elder brother, student in Amherst College, was her mentor during early girlhood. Later she attended excellent private schools in Providence, and before many years the family removed to that city, the natural metropolis of the Blackstone Valley. In Providence she always afterward resided, and with it she may be said to have had a lifelong familiarity.

Natural quickness and clearness of apprehension gave every educational opportunity full chance to fructify, and her eager mind reached out into many fields of reading not then the ordinary province of attractive young ladies who enjoyed life and society in full measure. To one who first met her when she

must have been about twenty-seven, there still remains a vivid remembrance of the astonishment with which at that first meeting he heard this beautiful girl debate, with light wit but with extraordinary acuteness and good sense, the movements then current in political economy. Collegiate education for young women was still a novelty at the time when Miss Kimball would naturally have sought it, but she did much of her reading under the guidance of the Society for the Encouragement of Study at Home.

Soon after the doors of Brown University were first opened to women, Miss Kimball entered some of its classes, more especially those in history, and at various times, indeed for five academic years in the period from 1894 to 1901, she was enrolled as one of its special students, never seeking a degree, but always pursuing with eager intelligence and singular skill the subjects of her choice. Her fitness to pursue graduate courses was so soon demonstrated that most of her academic work lay in them. All was done with fine precision but without pedantry, in the best spirit of the amateur who loves learning for its own sake yet appreciates that its choicest pleasures are not to be had through the methods of the mere dilettante, but by adding to the amateur's breadth and sense of proportion the care and exactness of the professional scholar.

This spirit was not changed when, by reason of her

father's death, Miss Kimball began within the period mentioned to use her rich acquirements and her gifts of expression for other purposes than those of her own pleasure and cultivation. As a teacher for a dozen years in the chief private school for girls in Providence, and for a less time in another, she made her instruction vivid and brilliant, laying her treasures of historical and literary knowledge before young minds with an adaptive skill born of the amateur's good sense, of keen insight into youthful character, of catholic intellectual sympathies, of a genial sense of humor and a kind heart. It was a matter of course that susceptible girls should be impressed by her beauty, her charm, and her cleverness, but they also found in her a helpful and appreciative friend. Her views of history were just and sane. Her inherited interest in business and her studies in economic and political science enabled her to widen the cloistered minds of well-to-do girls by large glimpses of the masculine view of public affairs. Her methods of teaching were both sound and ingenious. Her remarkable memory permitted her to make her teaching free and informal, her wit made it lively and mordant.

An ambition to take part in the work of productive scholarship developed out of the university courses which have been mentioned. To the editor of the *American Historical Review*, conducted in Providence in its earlier years, she rendered valuable

services, and helped signally and often in the work of the Historical Manuscripts Commission established in those days by the American Historical Association. A "seminary" paper developed into her first independent publication, a brief but solid and entertaining monograph on *The East India Trade of Providence from 1787 to 1807*, read before the Rhode Island Historical Society and published at Providence in 1896. Next came a volume of *Pictures of Rhode Island in the Past, 1642-1833*, published at Providence in 1899, in which Miss Kimball printed a series of interesting descriptions of Rhode Island by travellers who visited it in the seventeenth, the eighteenth, and the early nineteenth centuries.

A "seminary" inspection of the archives of the state of Rhode Island led to a paper on those archives, read before the Society of Colonial Dames of Rhode Island, and this in turn to the editing for that society of *The Correspondence of the Colonial Governors of Rhode Island, 1723-1775*, published at Boston in two handsome volumes in 1902 and 1903. The letters printed in this valuable publication were drawn from the Rhode Island archives and other sources, and provided with an introduction and annotations so learned and skilful as to make the book an important source for colonial history. Its preparation laid the foundation of that ripe knowledge of Rhode Island affairs in the eighteenth century which appears so plainly in the present book.



The thoroughness, scholarship, and good taste with which this work was executed led the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, in beginning their useful and highly creditable series of documentary historical publications, to invite Miss Kimball to edit for them their first two volumes, comprising *The Correspondence of William Pitt, when Secretary of State, with Colonial Governors and Military and Naval Commissioners* [Commanders] *in America* (New York, 1906). The task was similar, and was performed with the same skill. It has furnished the student of the French and Indian War with an invaluable source of knowledge respecting the guidance, the dominating ideas, and the events of that struggle in its most heroic years. The materials of which it was composed are preserved in the Public Record Office in London, and were investigated there by Miss Kimball in the course of a year in Europe.

The year alluded to, that of 1902-03, was spent mostly in Rome, where Miss Kimball enjoyed both her archæological studies and lectures at the university and her opportunities for acquiring a knowledge of Italian life and character. With the exception of this year, and of one or two briefer visits to Europe, all her later life was spent in Providence, in such occupations as have been indicated above. But many of her hours were spent in Providence society, in which she was a bright and welcome presence.

Her cheerful and even gay spirits; her refined and resourceful mind, her wit and tact, her extraordinary quickness and skill in conversation, her beauty and grace and obvious distinction, but above all her humane feeling and friendly kindness, made her a constant source of social pleasure. She, on the other hand, enjoyed and appreciated Providence. She knew its foibles. She knew that one could not found a town in extreme individualism in the seventeenth century, nourish it by commerce in the eighteenth and by manufactures in the nineteenth, and then expect it to show in the twentieth no traces of "other-wisemindedness," no regard for mundane maxims, no tendency to prefer individual solvency above social reform. But, as the reader of this book will easily see, she looked with a gentle smile upon the imperfections and peculiarities of the quaint colonial town and vigorous modern city she knew so well, and wrote of its development *con amore*.

In this city of her affection, on the twentieth day of June, 1910, Miss Kimball came suddenly and prematurely, but with characteristic bravery, to the end of her bright and vivid life, leaving to many hearts the poignant remembrance of exceptional accomplishments and charm, and of not less exceptional force of character, sympathy, and human kindness.

Rose Aylmer, all were thine!

During the closing months of her life, she had been

much occupied with a portrayal of the history of Providence. At her death, it was found that the chapters running to the outbreak of the Revolutionary War had been quite finished and were ready for publication. In tribute to her memory these chapters, having a unity of their own as presenting the story of Providence in Colonial Times, are now published. For later chapters many notes had been taken, but nothing had been written save a fragmentary chapter on Providence Houses of the period immediately after the Revolution. This fragmentary chapter is appended.

J. FRANKLIN JAMESON.



## PROVIDENCE IN COLONIAL TIMES





# PROVIDENCE IN *Colonial Times*

## Chapter I

### THE PLANTER AND HIS PLANTATION

IN the reign of King James the First of England the celebrated jurist and statesman Sir Edward Coke, while presiding one day in the Court of Star Chamber, found his attention attracted by a bright-faced boy of some fourteen years.

The lad was diligently employed in taking down in shorthand the sermons and speeches delivered before that august assembly of learned judges and lords. His industry, modest bearing, and winning personality induced the great man to make inquiries as to his lineage and prospects. Thereby he learned that the boy's name was Roger Williams. His father was a well-to-do merchant tailor of the City of London, while his mother could boast a connection with the Pemberton family, and it is not in the least improbable that to this family influence young Roger owed his employment within the precincts of the Star Chamber. It was by no means an ill wind that led Sir Edward Coke to interest himself in the little shorthand scribe. He placed the boy in the Charterhouse

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#### 4 *Providence in Colonial Times*

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School, and later made it possible for him to enter Pembroke College at Cambridge, where he took his degree in 1626.

These early years of the seventeenth century were stirring times throughout England, and especially for London, the centre of the political and commercial life of the nation. The London of the seventeenth century was fiercely Protestant, and this protesting spirit fostered and upheld the right of free thought and free doctrine, as against the force of authority.

That the young student at Cambridge was conversant with the great questions of his time cannot admit of doubt. His university was a centre for liberal opinions, and he himself was ever an eager student and questioner of "things unseen." We have no positive knowledge of his career after leaving the university, until the year 1629. In that year Laud became Bishop of London, and immediately the people of his great diocese, nine tenths of whom, if not Puritan, were strongly Protestant, saw with rage and indignation the forcible introduction into their religious service of forms and ceremonies most offensive to their Puritan feelings. They saw their honored clergy expelled from their pulpits, and they watched with horror and fear the encroachments of that ritual, which, in their eyes, led nowhere but to Rome and perdition. In 1629, the great emigration to America began. Men and women of every station and every calling crowded to the ships. For one and all, the man of rank and



property, the farmer, and the tradesman, the vital issue was his religious creed. In 1630, alone, seventeen hundred souls crossed the bleak Atlantic to the wilderness.

And it is in this critical year of 1629, when England is seething with excitement and the strife of many tongues is raging, that we again catch sight of the future pioneer of religious liberty in America. "Far from the madding crowd," he is living at the country-seat of Sir William Masham, of Otes, Essex, in the capacity of chaplain, and, like many another young man in a similar position, he has fallen in love with a certain fair virgin of the house, who appears to have been a cousin of the Lady Masham. The young lover is moved to consult her guardian and aunt, Lady Barrington. This stately duenna was likewise aunt to no less a personage than the great Oliver, the future Lord Protector of England, whose path was to cross that of the young chaplain at more than one auspicious moment, in the years to come. To her, in the spring of 1629, there came the following frank confession: —

DEAR AND HONOURED MADAME,

Many and often speeches have long fluttered or flowne abroad concerning your Ladiships neere kinswoman and my unworthy selfe. . . . I acknowledge my selfe altogether unworthy unmeete for such a proposition. The neereness of her blood to your Ladiship & godly flourishing branches hath forc't me to confesse her Portion, in that regard, to be beyond com-

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pare invaluable. Yet many feares have much possest me Longe. I have to discover that sinceritie and Godliness which makes the Lord himselfe to like his Creature. . . . Objections have come in about her spirit, much accused for passionate & hastie, rash & unconstant. . . . For my own part It is well knowne . . . How a gracious God & tender conscience . . . hath kept me back from honour and preferment Besides many former offers & that late New England call, I have since had 2 severall livings preferred to me each of them 100*l* per annum: but as things yet stand among us I see not how any meanes & I shall meet that way . . . besides this meanes . . . little there is yet I can call mine. After the death of an aged loving mother amongst some other Children I may expect (though for the present she be close & will not promise) some 20*l*, or 20 marks per annum. At hand undisposed of I have some 7 score pieces & a little (yet costlie) studie of bookes. . . . I shall add for the present I know none in the world I more affect & (had the Lord been pleased to say amen in those other regards) should doubtles have fully answered (if not exceeded) her affection.

But I have learned another Lesson to still my soule as a weaned childe & give offence to none. . . .

This conscientious, rather than impassioned, outpouring was succeeded shortly by the following expression of somewhat conscious rectitude, and Christian resignation:

MADAME:

. . . I doubt not but your good wisdome & love have fairely interpreted my carriage in the late treatie, I allso trust, quieted & still'd the loving affections of your worthy niece. We hope to live together in the heavens though the Lord have denied that union on Earth.

So closed another "romance of a poor young man."

There may well be truth in the tradition that Roger Williams studied law immediately after leaving the university, as there can be no doubt that for a youth of his ability, backed by so powerful a patron as Sir Edward Coke, the profession of law gave ample assurance of a successful and honorable career. Indeed — so the tradition runs — his legal studies were actually begun, but his true interest and enthusiasm led him in another direction. "From my childhood," he says, "the father of lights and mercies touched my soul with a love for himself." His marked ability, backed, it may be, by a bit of family interest, opened before him the path of clerical preferment, as is shown by his own statement in his letter to Lady Barrington. Conscientious scruples, however, kept him from accepting the forms, ceremonies, and doctrines which made up the unifying system of the Anglican Church as applied by the Bishop of London. He "durst not join with them in their use of Common Prayer." "God knows," he writes at a later time, "what gains and preferments I have refused in universities, city, country, and court in Old England and something in New England . . . to keep my soul undefiled in this point not to act with a doubting conscience." Few details remain to us of those years of heart-searching. Whether or not Roger had the sympathy of his family is an open question. It is probable, however, that his father, a London trades-

man of that class most affected by the new ideas, would appreciate and honor his son's position.

The "aged mother," who in 1629 was "close, and would not promise" respecting her son's worldly prospects, died in 1634, leaving behind her a creditable stock of this world's goods. Roger's share was not munificent, and by no means fulfilled his expectations. "To my son, Roger Williams, now beyond the seas," was left "ten pounds yearly to be paid unto him . . . for and during the term of twenty years."

At the time of his mother's death, in 1634, her son Roger had been "beyond the seas" for full four years. More than a year and a half had passed since his expression of resignation and of the hope of heavenly joys was sent to Lady Barrington, when, on December 1, 1630, he took ship at Bristol for America; and with him went Mary, his wife. All that has been learned respecting the woman who shared Roger Williams's life of privation and struggle for more than forty-five years is that her maiden name was Mary Barnard. Her family, her English home, and the incidents of her first acquaintance with her husband, are alike unknown.

Roger Williams himself refers to the unifying zeal of Laud as the immediate cause of his departure. "It was as bitter as death to me," he wrote to the daughter of his patron, Sir Edward Coke, "when Bishop Laud pursued me out of this land, and my conscience was persuaded against the national Church, and cere-

monies, and bishops, beyond the conscience of your dear father.”

When the good ship *Lyon* entered the port of Salem, early in February, 1631, after a tempestuous voyage of some sixty-five days, Roger Williams and Mary, his wife, received an honorable welcome. Williams was himself known personally to some influential members of the little settlement, and by reputation to many of them. His arrival was commented on as that of a “godly minister,” and he was at once invited to fill the place of teacher to the church in Boston, in the absence of John Wilson, who was about to sail for England by the *Lyon*, on her return voyage. This offer was refused by the young preacher, on the ground that the Boston church had not formally withdrawn from the communion of the Church of England, and that his conscience would not permit him to countenance the manifold errors of that institution by ministering to one of its members. And this was but the initial step in a long career of theological knight-errantry. The young and ardent enthusiast levelled his gospel-spear at each and every error in theory or practice of which — judged by his standards — the Puritan theocracy of Massachusetts stood convicted. Conformity was the monster he had fled from England to avoid, and it was with unbounded amazement and indignation that he saw revealed in New England a uniformity as unyielding and all-embracing as that of Laud.

His few months of residence in Salem, in the spring and summer of 1631, were enlivened by his emphatic assertion that the civil magistrate had no moral right to punish infractions of the First Table of the Decalogue (namely, the first four of the Ten Commandments); and also by his persistent reiteration of the contention that, by not formally separating from the Church of England, the churches of New England were conniving at error, and compromising with Anti-Christ. Before the summer was ended, he had removed to Plymouth, where the theological atmosphere was a trifle less bleak; and there for two years he abode as teacher, diversifying his ministrations to the Pilgrim Fathers by a brisk discussion of the theme that "Christian Kings (so-called) are invested with a right, by virtue of their Christianity, to take and give away the lands and countries of other men." This proposition, as interpreted by Williams, led to a denial of the validity of the royal land grants, and the assertion that an equitable title to the land could only be obtained from its rightful owners, the Indians.

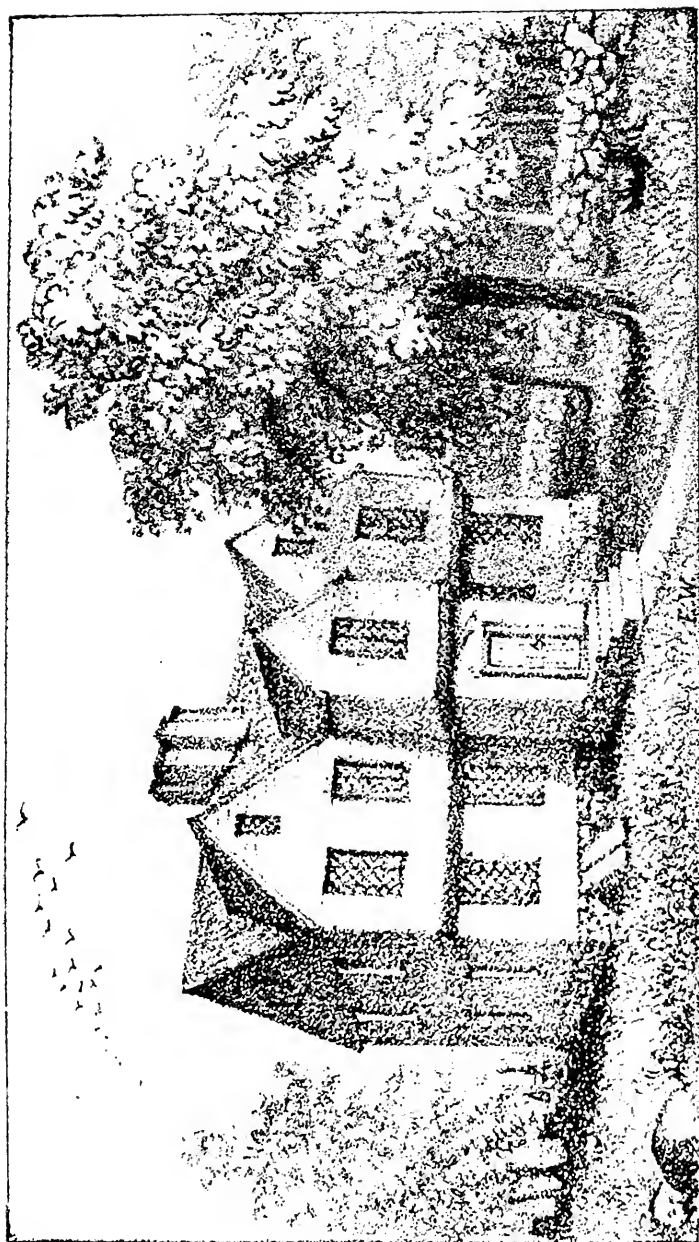
These years are also memorable, in the record of Roger Williams's experiences, for his missionary work among the Indians. "God was pleased to give me," he tells us, "a painful patient spirit to lodge with them in their filthy smoke-holes . . . to gain their tongue," and he "dug into their barbarous rockie speech" to such good purpose that we are told by a Massachusetts writer of 1634 that he "hath spent

ROGER WILLIAMS HOUSE AT SALEM

From a drawing in Edwin Whitefield's *Homes of our  
Forefathers in Massachusetts*, 1880.









much time in attaining to their language wherein he is so good a proficient that he can speak to their understanding, and they to his; much loving and respecting him for his love and counsell." This friendship stood him in good stead, for by its aid he was able — when driven from his home by the fury of the long-gathering storm — to obtain from Canonicus, "the old high Sachem of the Narragansett Bay," and his nephew and heir, Miantonomi, a grant of land beyond the bounds of the Massachusetts patent.

In 1633, Roger Williams found himself once more in Salem, installed there as assistant to Mr. Skelton of the church of that town. He left behind him in Plymouth the reputation of "a man godly and zealous, having many precious parts, but very unsettled in judgement . . . he is to be pitied, and prayed for, and so I shall . . . desire the Lord to shew him his errors, and reduce him in the way of truth, and give him a settled judgement and constancy in the same." The words are those of Governor Bradford. Skelton died during the year, and Williams was invited to become teacher (or expounder of doctrine) of the church, in his place. The arena was now clear, and the antagonists on both sides were eager for the chance to combat error with the invincible arm of truth. Issue was first taken at the practice of the clergy of the neighborhood in holding regular meetings, as tending to establish a "superintendency to the prejudice of the church's liberties." The question of the land

patents was again brought forward. Once more Williams maintained that "all men may walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the name of his God." Carrying out this line of thought, he at length contended that no unregenerate person should have an oath administered to him, since an oath was an act of worship, and "persons may as well be forced unto any part of the worship of God as unto this."

Mere considerations of expediency, of a time to speak, and a time to keep silent, were for Roger Williams as if non-existent. Having hitched his wagon to the star of truth, he followed his beacon-light with that uncompromising zeal and sublime disregard of mere material obstacles which so often characterizes the reformer. But for the magistrates of the Bay Colony the matter was not one to be approached from a purely theoretical, or even theological, point of view, although on either of these indictments they would have found plenty of matter for condemnation in Williams's course of action. Mr. Richman has shown his fairness and discrimination in pointing out that, at the moment when Williams renewed his attack on the royal patent, the magistrates were deeply concerned over news from England to the effect that the King was considering the feasibility of sending out a general governor for the colonies, and recalling their patents, — and the recall of the patent meant the loss of all the Puritan

colony held dear. When Roger Williams was fulminating against the administration of oaths, these same perplexed magistrates were administering a special oath for the purpose of testing the loyalty of the free-men to the theocracy which had been set up.

The final break, however, came in this wise: the town of Salem petitioned the General Court of the colony with respect to a land claim. The petition came up for consideration, in due course, and was refused on the ground that the Salem church "had chosen Mr. Williams their teacher while he had stood under question of authority, and offered contempt to the magistrates." The church in Salem appealed in vain to the other churches of the Bay Colony; whereupon Williams called on it to withdraw from the others, and when the church refused to take this extreme step, he himself promptly withdrew from that and all of the Bay communions. He even carried his zeal so far as to refuse to pray with his wife, or to ask a blessing on the table at which she sat, because she had refused to withdraw from the church communion. It is small wonder that to the "lords brethren" of the Bay, Roger Williams appeared an incorrigible offender. To them he was obstinate, wrongheaded, and purposely persistent in the effort to disturb all law and order. To their minds even to the third generation, he figured as the prototype of disaffection. Sixty years later, Cotton Mather wrote of him: "In the year 1654 a certain wind-mill in the

Low Countries, whirling around with extraordinary violence by reason of a violent storm then blowing, the stone at length by its rapid motion became so intensely hot as to fire the mill, from whence the flames being dispersed by the high winds, did set a whole town on fire. But I can tell my reader that above twenty years before this there was a whole country in America like to be set on fire by the rapid motion of a wind-mill in the head of one particular man."

The matter was brought to a close on October 9, 1635, when the General Court sentenced Williams "to depart out of our jurisdiction within six weeks." An illness, and the near approach of winter, led to a commutation of the sentence, so far as to permit Williams to stay in Salem until spring. Whatever his plans for the future may have been, it is extremely doubtful if he ever intended "to erect a plantation about the Narragansett Bay." His own statement is that he sought a refuge among the Indians "to do them good," and that he "desired to be without English company." In the mean time he improved the opportunity "to do good" to the good people of Salem with such diligence that many "were taken with an apprehension of his godliness," and the matter was brought to the attention of the General Court. This formidable body came promptly to the conclusion that the time for parleying was past, and forthwith summoned the offender to appear before them, in Boston. Even before the citation was brought to

Salem, news had reached Williams of a plan to send him to England. A few hurried preparations were made, and with his servant, Thomas Angell, the intrepid pioneer took his way through the January snows and frosts to his friends, the Narraganset Indians. "I was sorely tossed," he says, "for one fourteen weeks, in a bitter winter season, not knowing what bread or bed did mean, beside the yearly loss of no small matter in my trading with the English and natives, being debarred from Boston, the chief mart and port of New England."

His departure was resolved upon none too quickly. Three days later, the doughty Captain John Underhill arrived in Salem Harbor with a warrant from the General Court for the apprehension of Roger Williams. Once on board the little vessel, only awaiting the arrival of her passenger before spreading her white wings to take flight for the other side of the Atlantic, it would have been many a long day before the troublesome schismatic could again disturb the established order of the Lord's anointed. His banishment not only put Salem "in an uproar," where "he was esteemed an honest, disinterested man, and of popular talents in the pulpit"; but even in England, those interested in the colony's welfare deplored his loss. Sir William Martin wrote to Governor Winthrop: "I am sorry to hear of Mr. Williams's separation from you. . . . I pray show him what lawful favor you can, which may stand with the common

good. He is passionate and precipitate, which may transport him into error, but I hope his integrity and good intentions will bring him at last into the way of truth, and confirm him therein."

From Roger Williams's own pen we have a graphic, if all too meagre, account of his wanderings, and his hopes and fears for the future. He says: "When I was unkindly and unchristianly, as I believe, driven from my house, and land and wife and children, in the midst of a New England winter, . . . at Salem . . . I steered my course . . . though in winter snow, which I feel yet, unto these parts. . . . It is not true that I was employed by any, made covenant with any, or desired any to come with me. . . . My soul's desire was to do the natives good, and to that end have their language . . . and therefore desired not to be troubled with English company, yet out of Pity, I gave leave to W. Harris, then poor and destitute, to come along in my company, I consented to John Smith, Miller, at Dorchester (banished also) to go with me, and at John Smith's desire, to a poor young fellow, Francis Wicks, as also to a lad of Richard Watermans." To these must be added the name of Joshua Verin, making six in all.

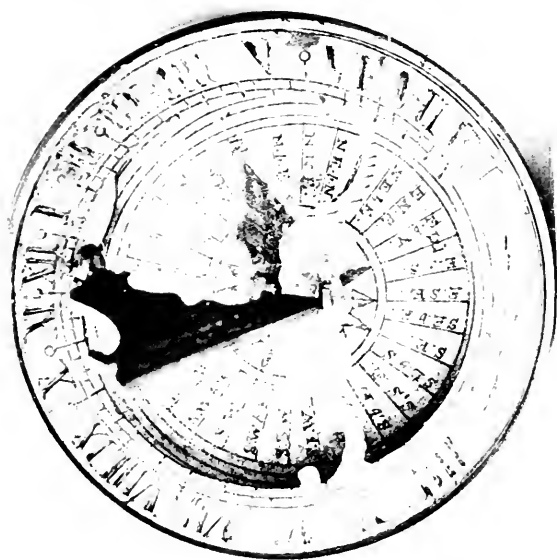
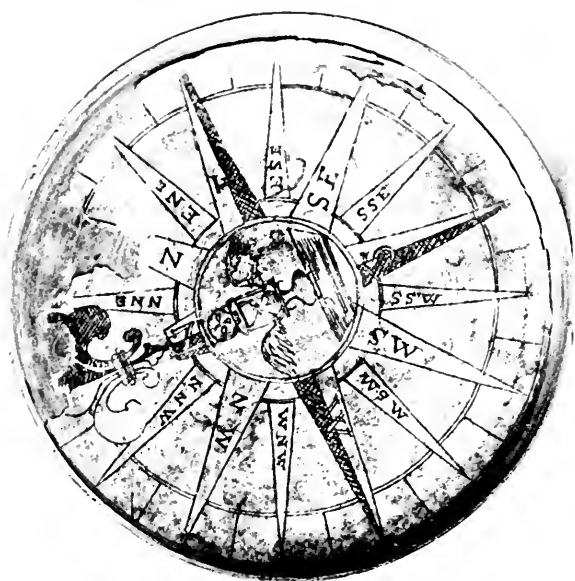
"I first pitched and began to build and plant at Seekonk, now Rehoboth [Massachusetts]; but I received a letter from my ancient friend Mr. Winslow, then Governor of Plymouth, professing his own and others' love and respect to me, yet lovingly advising



#### COMPASS AND SUN-DIAL

Owned by Roger Williams and presumably used by him on his journey into exile in 1635. Its line of descent has been traced from Roger Williams to its present custodian, the Rhode Island Historical Society.







me, since I was fallen into the edge of their bounds [namely, those of the Plymouth Colony], and they were loth to displease the Bay [Colony], to remove to the other side of the water, and then he said I had the country free before me, and might be as free as themselves, and we should be loving neighbors together."

It was, accordingly, from the Seekonk shore that the little canoe bearing Roger Williams and his companions pushed out into the wide stream, and crossed to "Mooshassuc," — the name given by the Indians to the peninsula between the Seekonk and Moshassuc Rivers, whereon a goodly portion of the city of Providence now stands. The friendly hail of the Indians, "Whatcheer, Netop!" came (so tradition tells us) from Slate Rock, which the venerable Moses Brown, writing in 1828, describes as "jutting out into the river." The so-called Slate Rock of the present generation has long been high above tide-water, and now lies buried under the earth recently filled in to form Roger Williams Square. Having closed the interview with the Indians, and thereby unconsciously provided a title for every species of public and private enterprise in which their descendants might choose to engage, from Whatcheer Insurance Companies to the manufacture of Whatcheer Laundry Soap, the little company of pioneers held cheerfully on their way. They rounded the hill at the southern end of the peninsula, — now levelled and known as

Fox Point, — and after paddling a short distance up the stream of the Moshassuc, landed at a point where a clear bubbling spring discharged its waters into those of the “Great Salt River.”

Such is the ancient and honorable tradition of the founding of Providence, dating from a time when the memory of man runneth not to the contrary. We are also told that the pioneers, on landing, were hospitably invited to dine with the natives “on succotash and boiled bass, then cooking over the fire.” As late as 1801, “there was a living stream constantly flowing from a large boiling spring, curbed and covered with stones, and overflowing into a trough for conducting the water into a tub formed of a half-hogs-head set in the ground conveniently for cattle to drink therefrom. Thence the water continued its course to the river adjacent; so that in passing the outlet in a boat the stream was manifest. . . .” This description was written in 1880, at the age of eighty-five, by the Honorable Zachariah Allen, one of Providence’s most honored citizens, whose father’s residence was within one hundred yards of the spring in question.

Roger Williams had already established with the Indians that friendship and influence which placed the little plantation on a footing of security and permanence. While he lived in Salem and Plymouth, he “spared no cost towards them . . . in Gifts, tokens and presents . . . and therefore when I came I was welcome to . . . Canonicus, who was most shy

PICTURE OF SLATE ROCK AND SEEKONK RIVER

From a water-color sketch painted by Edward L. Peckham in 1832, now in the Rhode Island Historical Society.









of all English to his last breath." Lands on the Moshassuc and Wanasquatucket Rivers were readily obtained from the Narraganset sachems. The deed of conveyance, signed by them two years later, on March 24, 1638, recites that "in consideration of many kindnesses and services he [Roger Williams] hath continually done for us . . . we do freely give him all the land from those rivers, reaching to Pawtuxet river; as also the Grass and meadows upon the said Pawtuxet river." This last-mentioned tract was an addition to the original grant.

The lands thus designated comprised a territory of about four square miles. It included the peninsula formed by the Seekonk and Moshassuc Rivers, whereon the East Side of the present city stands, as far north as "the Rivers and Fields of Pautucket." The Seekonk lies to the east, and the Moshassuc to the west, of this peninsula, and both empty into Providence Harbor at a distance from each other of about a mile. To the west of the Moshassuc is the Wanasquatucket, which flows south and east into the cove above the harbor. The swift current of these two streams, as they met in the shallow cove, had eaten away the soft soil of the western shore, and formed a large tract of marshland on that side of the river. Some five miles to the south of Providence, the Pawtuxet, after a course of some twenty-five or thirty miles, flows northeast into Narragansett Bay. The western limit of the original township was marked by

the so-called Four Mile Line, running down from Neutakonkanut Hill, a short distance south of the Wanasquatucket River, to the point where the Pachaset, or Pocasset, River enters the Pawtuxet, about three miles from its mouth.

It would seem as if the presence of the freshwater spring must have been the ruling consideration in the selection of a spot "to build and plant." The land in the vicinity was not fertile, and the topography was poorly adapted for farming. For some two miles along the east bank of the Moshassuc a line of bluffs rose to an elevation of about two hundred feet, leaving but a narrow margin between the hillside and the water's edge. From the top of this bluff the land sloped gently eastward across the peninsula, to the Seekonk, about a mile away. On the west of the Moshassuc, on Weybosset Neck, the high tide overflowed large tracts of marshland, dotted here and there with little islands on which the rank marsh-grass grew. Beyond was a rolling country with a sandy soil, whose low hills were covered with pines.

Roger Williams was at all times an Indian trader, as well as an Indian missionary, and doubtless the ease with which his new station at the juncture of three rivers could be reached, no less than its "freedom and vacancy," commended the place to him. The plantation was also rendered easy of access from the fact that it lay directly on the great Indian thoroughfare known as the "Pequod Path," which was to

serve the colonists as the main highway of travel and communication for many a long year to come, and is still known to their descendants as the "Shore-Line Railroad." Crossing the Seekonk about a mile above its mouth, the trail led westward to the Moshassuc, forded that river, and then struck south to Wickford, the "Cawcawmsquussick" of Roger Williams. It skirted the heights above the Pettaquamscutt River, some three miles inland from the west shore of Narragansett Bay, to Sugar Loaf Hill; there it bore to the southwest, and led to Pawcatuck, the headquarters of the sachem Ninigret, and the present city of Westerly. Doubtless Roger Williams spoke the literal truth when he asserted that Canonicus "was not to be stirred with money to sell his Lands to let in foreigners. 'Tis true he received presents and gratuities many of me, but, . . . Thousands could not have bought of him Providence or Pawtuxet . . . or any other land I had of him." Nor could thousands have secured that "loving and peaceable neighborhood with them all," which exempted the Providence Plantation from Indian raids, — the most constant and terrible danger that threatened the colonial pioneer.

The summer of 1636 saw the little community settled into a routine of everyday life. "Having in a sense of God's mercifull providence unto me in my distresse called the place Providence, I desired it might be for a shelter for persons distressed of conscience," declared its founder. "We have no Patent,"

he writes to his friend Winthrop, probably in August or September of that year, "nor doth the face of Magistracy suit with our present condition. Hitherto, the masters of families have ordinarily met once a fortnight and consulted about our common peace, watch, and with mutual consent have finished all matters with speed and peace."

Soon, however, others, "some young men, single persons," of whom there was "much need," came to the new plantation, and very naturally their enthusiasm for mission work among the Indians, and for sheltering those "distressed of conscience," speedily became subordinate to the desire to reap where they had sown, to gather into barns, and to own the lands which they had painfully cleared. This contingent among the settlers found in William Harris, who had crossed the Seekonk "poor and destitute," a leader ready to their hand. He it was who, "pretending Religion, wearied me with desires," writes Roger Williams, "that I should admit him and others into fellowship of my purchase. I yielded and agreed that the place should be for such as were destitute (especially for Conscience Sake)." It was in accordance with this resolution that, in October, 1638, Williams executed to twelve persons, including William Harris, a conveyance of the land received from the sachems, "unto my loving friends and neighbors, . . . and such others as the major part of us shall admit into the same fellowship of vote with us." Each of these

twelve "first-comers" paid thirty shillings "towards a town stock," and it was further agreed that Roger Williams should have thirty pounds as a "loving consideration and gratuitye" for his "great charge and travell" in the matter. Of this he received "£28 in broken parcels in five years."

The land being conveyed to the "fellowship," it was parcelled out to the original grantees and those whom they voted to admit to the body of "proprietors," fifty-two in all. The later settlers received as proprietors also paid thirty shillings, which "went to a town and public use." A road, or "Street," was laid out for about two miles along the east shore of the Moshassuc, the Great Salt River. The land abutting on this future thoroughfare (the present North and South Main Streets) was then laid out in fifty-two long narrow lots, called home lots, or house lots, of approximately five acres each. These ran back to the present Hope Street, then and long afterward known as "the highway," or "the highway at the head of the lots." Each proprietor had also, in addition to his home lot, a six-acre lot for planting. This might be either on the east side of "the Neck" — as the peninsula between the Moshassuc and the Seekonk was called — or to the west of the Great Salt River. Lots of varying size were also apportioned from the "lands and meddowes on Waubossett Side," west of the Moshassuc River. To the south of these lots, or farms, lay the meadows along the Pawtuxet

and Pachaset Rivers known as the "Pawtuxet Purchase." The division was made with the apparent object of securing to each proprietor one hundred acres of land of approximately equal value. Each householder was in this way provided with a home lot, a farm for planting, meadow or pasture land for his cattle, and a tract or tracts of woodland. Designated tracts of land were held "in common," in accordance with the custom of every English village, and, as in England, each man had his rights as a townsman to pasture and firewood from the common lands.

We may well believe that "the Streete" already spoken of was little more than a partially cleared pathway, along the line of which were marked at assigned intervals the bounds of the home lots. Soon, however, rude yet substantial dwellings were put up at different points along the line of the shore, and by 1640 life on the Towne Street had developed to such an extent that civic and religious centres of common interest began to appear. It was in that year that, in view of "the many differences amongst us," four worthy townsmen were selected by their "loving friends and neighbors" "to weigh & consider all these differences, being desirous to bring [them] to unity and peace," and after due deliberation they reported that they apprehended "no way so suitable to our Condition as government by way of arbitration." The adjustment of differing opinions, as well as of land dividends, was to be in the hands of five arbitra-



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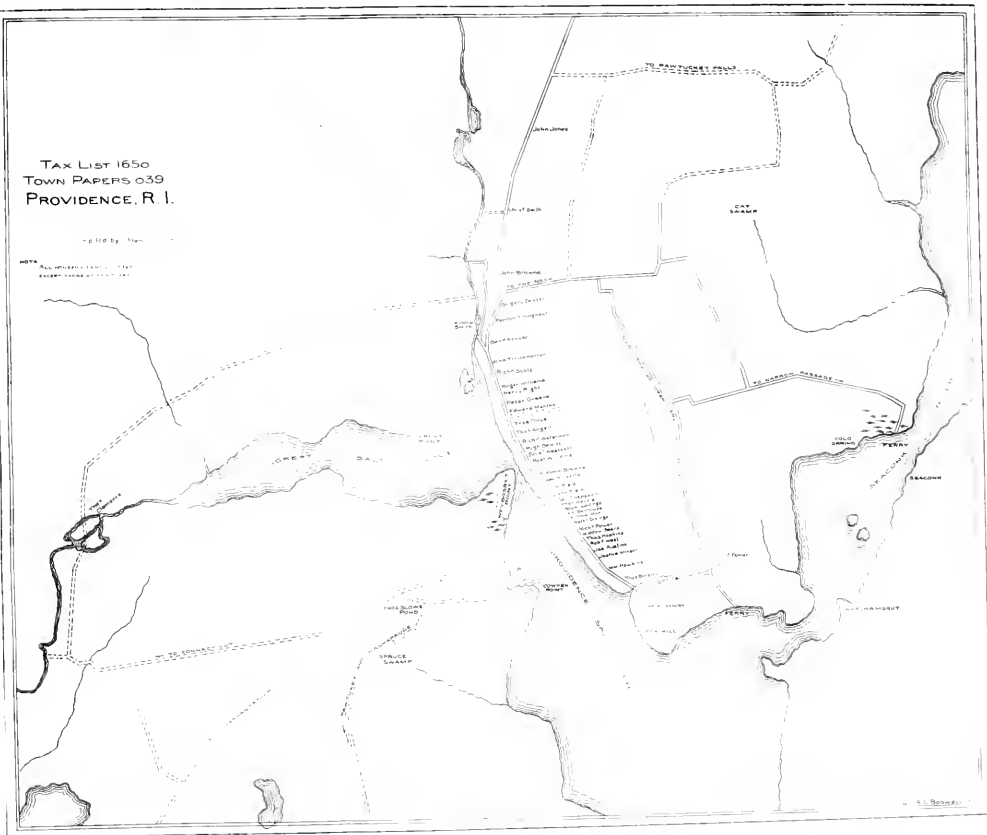
FOX HILL

RIVER

TAX LIST 1650  
TOWN PAPERS 039  
PROVIDENCE, R. I.

→ guided by theory

NOTE  
All results are based on a 10%  
level of significance and a two-tailed test.



tors, or "disposers." These were to "meete every month-day uppon General things," and to hold office for three months. Town-meetings were to be held "every quarter," but should a case arise admitting no delay, a special meeting might be called. "Any party delinquent" was to be apprehended by the combined efforts of his fellow-townsmen, who were bound to assist the cause of justice with their "best endeavours to attack him." Toleration in religious matters was reaffirmed: "wee agree, as formerly hath bin the liberties of the town, so still, to hould forth liberty of Conscience." These fundamental points, and certain details of the town administration, were presented by the committee, "as our absolute determination, laying ourselves down as subjects to it," and a list of thirty-nine signatures, accepting this "determination," follows the closing words.

The only common religious interest held by the first comers was, it is hardly necessary to say, the obligation resting on each to walk in the path of truth as his conscience should "persuade" him. Such an obligation might, or might not, work for concord and good-will. It certainly would not appear to be an impelling force toward church organization. It so happened, however, that in 1637 a certain Mrs. Richard Scott arrived in town. Mrs. Scott was the wife of a Boston shoemaker, whose religious principles so far differed from those prevalent in the Bay Colony that

he had betaken himself to the Providence Plantation, where he was assigned a home lot, and became a well-to-do citizen. Nor was this the only item of interest respecting the lady's family connections. She was a sister of the famous Mrs. Anne Hutchinson, whose "weekly religious reviews" had so sorely racked the theological world of Boston but a short time before. It is quite possible that Mrs. Scott possessed something of her sister's "active spirit" and "very voluble tongue." At all events, she is said to have been "infested with Anabaptistry and . . . to have emboldened" no less a person than Roger Williams "to make open profession thereof." He accordingly, so runs the narrative, "was rebaptized by one Holy man, a poor man late of Salem," but now (1638) a respected proprietor in the town of Providence, where he was regarded as "a man of gifts and piety." Roger Williams, after receiving the sacrament of baptism at the hands of Ezekiel Holliman, "re-baptised him and some ten more."

It was not Mrs. Scott, however, who could claim to be the pioneer in that field of action known to us of the present day as the "Higher Education of Woman." Even before her eloquence was exerted to elucidate the "Anabaptist" point of view as to certain perplexing theological questions, "the Devil was not idle," — if we may quote the incisive words of Winthrop. That estimable man proceeds to relate that "at Providence . . . men's wives and children claim-

ing to go to all religious meetings, tho' never so often, or . . . upon week days; and because one Verin refused to let his wife go to Mr. Williams so often as she was called for, they require to have him censured." And censured he was, by a formal vote of his fellow-townsmen, at the conclusion of a spirited debate on liberty of conscience versus the scriptural injunction to wives, to obey their husbands. The general sense of the community seemed to be that it was, to say the least, inexpedient to "restrain their wives." There is reason to think that the Joshua Verin in question did not enjoy an unqualified reputation for discretion, or for piety. He is described by Williams as "a young man boisterous and desperate, who refused to hear the word with us," and his treatment of his wife was such that "she went in danger of her life." This turbulent pioneer shortly withdrew from the Providence Plantation and returned to Salem, "clamoring for justice."

We are told that the little group of worshippers "in the Baptist Way" were joined by "many of the company." Roger Williams himself did not remain long a member of the communion. The limitations of any creed were irksome to his temperament, and also to the severely logical bent of his intellect. "He set up a Way of Seeking, by way of preaching and Praying," wrote his old neighbor, Richard Scott, many years later. Scott, and his eloquent wife also, had joined the Quakers, whose practice as well as their precepts

were truly an abomination in the sight of Roger Williams. The versatile Mrs. Scott found good reasons for changing her religious creed once more before her death, but her husband held fast by the teaching of George Fox, and died, some forty-five years later, in the odor of Quaker sanctity.

Other, and more immediately practical, questions than those of infant baptism and close communion forced themselves on the attention of the early settlers. "The discussor's time hath not been spent altogether in spiritual labors and public exercises of the word," says Roger Williams, "but day and night, at home and abroad, on land and water, at the hoe and at the oar, for bread." In the summer of 1636, his wife with their two baby girls had joined him. The older, Mary, was not yet three, and little Freeborn hardly six months. His oldest son, born in 1638, was called Providence, in honor of the new settlement. The difficulty with which the householders provided security and some small measure of comfort for their families is the dominating thought awakened by the perusal of such scanty records as are left us of these early days. Roger Williams writes to Winthrop in the September of 1638: "Sir, my wife (together with her best respects, to Mrs. Winthrop), requests her acceptance of an handfull of chesnuts, intending her (if Mrs. Winthrop love them) a bigger basket of them at the return of [the messenger]." The despatch of a handful of chestnuts from Providence to Boston, by

way of a complimentary present, suggests a poverty which may serve to enlighten us as to the reasons for Roger Williams's great anxiety respecting the fate of his worldly goods, left behind in Salem. "A heifer . . . and the increase of her; upwards of four score weight of tobacco; above 8*l.* for three goats due me when they were two years since, about 4*l.* a goat; an house watch; and another new gown of my wives, new come forth of England, and cost between 40 and 50 shillings," would have been no mean addition to the resources of the pioneer home at Providence Plantation, in the year of grace, 1637.

In these early years supplies came chiefly from the Bay Colony and Plymouth, when they came at all. The distance was great, and the journey painfully made overland. Save for an occasional pinnace, we read of no seagoing craft more staunch than a canoe; and although the intrepid Roger Williams tells of "cutting through a stormy wind, with great seas," in this frail boat, in the urgency of his errand to the Pequod Indians, it is probable that freight was sent by the slower and safer land route. Doubtless small commissions were despatched by a woodsman, sometimes by an Indian. More bulky articles were shipped to Newport, or came through Rehoboth. "T is true I may hire an Indian" (i.e., as messenger), Roger Williams allows, "yet not always, not sure, for these two things I have found in them; sometimes long keeping of a letter; secondly, if a fear take them that

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### 30 *Providence in Colonial Times*

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the letter concerns themselves they suppress it." He sends to his Boston friends for such articles as "medicine suitable to these Indian bodies, also some drawing plaster, & if the charge rise to one or two crowns," he will "thankfully pay it." His Indian corn, he says, will be disposed of to the Boston merchants, or to those of Seekonk. The price quoted in 1647 is four shillings a bushel. Two years later it came from Hempstead, Long Island, and was "extraordinary dear," at six shillings, while wheat was selling at eight.

So late as 1658, when the colony of the Providence Plantation ventured to differ from the Massachusetts theocracy as to the policy to be observed towards the Quakers, commercial reprisals were both looked for and dreaded. "They seem to threaten us, by cutting us off from all commerce and trade with them, and thereby to disable us from any comfortable subsistence, . . . knowing that ourselves are not in a capacity to send out shipping of ourselves." So writes the General Court of the colony to its agent in England, John Clarke. "They make the price, both of their commodities and our own." Another disadvantage under which the poorer colony labored was the great scarcity of English coin. "We have only that which passeth among these barbarians, and such commodities as are raised by the labor of our hands, as corn, cattle, tobacco, &c., to make payment in, which they will have at their own rates, or else not



deal with us; whereby . . . they gain extraordinarily by us."

This was by no means the first time that the hand of Massachusetts had fallen heavily on her weaker neighbor. In 1642, she found opportunity to put the doctrine of squatter sovereignty to the test. For although the Providence settlers held their territory by virtue of a more or less formal conveyance from the Indians, before the English common law they were purely and simply squatters. A little group of settlers on the farming-lands of Pawtuxet had found the tranquil order of their days unpleasantly disturbed by that arch-agitator, Samuel Gorton. They appealed to Massachusetts for aid in upholding the cause of law and order, and the Bay Colony agreed to permit the Pawtuxet farmers to put themselves under the sheltering wing of her jurisdiction. Upon this, Gorton and his followers withdrew to the neighboring peninsula of Shawomet, where developments of a stormy nature awaited them.

The conspicuous nature of Gorton's peculiar religious views and the persistency with which he advocated them, together with a fluency of tongue and pen, noteworthy even in that era of polemic, speedily secured him disciples, to whom the name of "Gortonists," or "Gortoneans," was somewhat contemptuously applied. Backus, the historian of the Baptists, writing in 1777, aptly characterizes Gorton and his methods. "He was a man of smart capacity, and of

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considerable learning, and when he pleased could express his ideas as plainly as any man; but he used such a mystical method in handling the Scriptures, and in speaking about religion, that people are not agreed to this day what his real sentiments were."

Public opinion in Providence was also unfriendly towards Gorton. He had been forced to leave the town, as the result of a street-brawl, and there was, consequently, no disposition to interfere actively with the attitude of Massachusetts. By this time, however, the towns of Newport and Portsmouth, on the island of Aquidneck, had amicably settled certain differences of opinion as to civil and religious matters, and had set up a form of government far more highly organized than anything to be found on the mainland. The leading townspeople on the island were men of substance and position, and also of political experience. In their eyes, the extension of the Massachusetts jurisdiction to any portion of Rhode Island soil was a pressing danger, which called for strong defensive measures. The most effective step practicable was promptly decided on, and Roger Williams was requested by the towns of Newport and Portsmouth to proceed forthwith to England, to apply for a patent from the English government.



## Chapter II

### THE AGE OF THE CHARTERS

**T**O a man of Roger Williams's kind-hearted and affectionate temperament, the return to his native land, after an enforced absence of fourteen years, must have been an event to be regarded with eager anticipation. He had left England a fugitive, "harried out of the land"; he came back to receive a warmly courteous welcome from powerful and sympathetic friends.

With characteristic disinterestedness he had defrayed the expenses of the journey by the sale of his rights in certain islands in Narragansett Bay, — namely, Patience, Prudence, and Hope. History is silent as to the ways and means at the disposal of his wife and six children, who remained at home. It was surely with sad misgivings that the wife and mother bade her husband Godspeed on that day in sunny June when he left her for the Dutch port of New Amsterdam, whence he was to take ship for England. The godly magistrates of the Massachusetts colony could not feel themselves justified in permitting so notorious a heretic within their seaports, even for the purpose of taking his departure therefrom. Whatever other preparations were made or neglected by our traveller, he took good care — as seems to have

been his unvarying habit—to provide an ample supply of pens, ink, and paper, and he employed his leisure during the long voyage in the composition of his famous *Key into the Language of America*. He tells us that he “drew the materials” for this racy account of the Indians, their language, and customs, “in a rude lump at sea, as a private help to my memory.” The little volume was printed in London, at the press of Gregory Dexter, who was already a proprietor in the town of Providence. It caught the public fancy, attracted much attention in official circles, and materially furthered the object of the author’s mission to London. Through the good offices of Sir Henry Vane, his former colleague in negotiations to avert the threatened league between the hostile Pequods and the Narraganset Indians, Roger Williams was enabled not only to present his request to the Board of Colonial Commissioners without delay, but to see it brought to a speedy and successful issue.

In the September of 1644, the planter sailed for America, taking with him “a full and absolute Charter of Civill Incorporation, to be known by the name of the Incorporation of the Providence Plantations in Narragansett Bay in New England.” This, in so many words, granted to the settlers “full power and authority to govern and rule themselves.” He also carried to the port of Boston, whither he took ship, a letter addressed to the Governor and Assistants of the Massachusetts Bay, on the part of the Parliamen-

TITLE-PAGE TO ROGER WILLIAMS'S "KEY TO THE  
INDIAN LANGUAGE"

From the original in the John Carter Brown Library.



A KEY into the  
**LANGUAGE**  
O F  
**AMERICA:**  
O R,

An help to the *Language* of the *Natives*  
in that part of A M E R I C A, called  
NEW-ENGLAND.

Together, with briefe *Observations* of the Cu-  
stomes, Manners and Worships, &c. of the  
aforesaid *Natives*, in Peace and Warre,  
in Life and Death.

On all which are added Spirituall *Observations*,  
Generall and Particular by the *Author*, of  
chiefe and speciall use (upon all occasions.) to  
all the *English* Inhabiting those parts:  
yet pleasant and profitable to  
the view of all men :

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BT ROGER WILLIAMS  
of Providence in New-England.

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LONDON,  
Printed by Gregory Dexter, 1643.





tary Commissioners. This interesting epistle contains an expression of "the sorrowful resentment" entertained in England that "amongst good men driven to the ends of the world . . . there should be such a distance," and suggests "a performance of all friendly offices" between the Bay Colony and the Providence Plantations, the more so because of "Mr. Roger Williams's great industry and travels in his printed Indian labors in your parts (the like whereof we have not seen extant from any part of America)."

On the receipt of so decided an intimation of the desirability of reconsidering their past conduct, the magistrates of the Massachusetts colony felt called on "to examine their hearts." The result of this examination was the gratifying conclusion that there was "no reason to condemn themselves for any former proceeding against Mr. Williams." And unless he could be brought to "lay down his dangerous principles of separation," they saw "no reason why to concede to him, or any so persuaded, free liberty of ingress and egress, lest any of their people should be drawn away with his erroneous opinions."

His Quaker neighbor, Richard Scott, has given an account of the homecoming, to which the desire to uphold his Quaker creed lends a touch of truly human asperity, that — softened by the distance of the centuries — is not without a certain charm of piquancy. "Coming from Boston to Providence," he says, "at Seaconk the Neighbours of Providence met

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him with fourteen Cannoes, and carried him to Providence. And the Man being hemmed in the middle of the Cannoes, was so Elevated and Transported out of himself, that I was condemned in myself, that amongst the Rest I had been an Instrument to set him up in his Pride and Folly." The thought of Roger Williams, that most disinterested and simple-hearted of men, so "set up" as to be "elevated and transported out of himself," cheers one's very soul. We can only wish that popular applause had more frequently greeted his untiring efforts for the public weal, and that it had been better sustained.

Although the charter was an avowed fact so early as 1644, and its authority fully recognized, it was not until two and a half years had slipped by that the wheels of governmental machinery were sufficiently well oiled to carry to a successful conclusion the first session of the "General Court of Election . . . for the Colony and Province of Providence." This body of lawmakers convened at Portsmouth, and in the three days of their session adopted a criminal and civil code, a bill of rights, a scheme of colonial administration providing for the local self-government of the towns, and an executive for the ensuing year. This last was made up of a president, four assistants, a treasurer, a "general recorder" or secretary, and a "general sargent," or sheriff. The town of Providence sent ten delegates to this first General Court of the colony, with instructions to set forth the wish of

Providence "to be governed by the Laws of England, so farr as the nature and Constitution of this plantation will admitt"; and further, "to have full power and authoritye to transacte all our home affaires."

Inasmuch as "Mr. Roger Williams hath taken great paines and expended much time in the obtayninge of the Charter for this Province," it was enacted that "in regard of his so great travaile, charges and good endeavours," he should be freely "given and granted £100." Of this amount Newport was to pay fifty pounds, Portsmouth thirty pounds, and Providence twenty pounds,—an apportionment showing the relative wealth of the island settlements and that of the mainland.

"The forme of Government" was declared "Democraticall." Warwick, now finally exempted from any claim on the part of Massachusetts, was admitted "to the same priviledges as Providence." All men were to "walk as their consciences persuade them, every one in the fear of his God." The code of law adopted, under the name of "The Bulk of the Laws," is remarkable for the humanitarian tendency of its enactments. Compared with the codes of its Puritan neighbors, which dealt the death penalty for blasphemy, profanity, and disobedience to, or cursing of, parents, that of the Providence Plantation seems to emit a spirit of charity. "Poor persons that steal for hunger" were not to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Imprisonment for debt was forbidden. "A sol-

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emn profession or testimony" was to be accounted "of as full force as an oath." The General Court of the colony was to meet on the first Tuesday after May 15 in each year, "if wind and weather hinder not," no small item in the account when we consider the necessity for navigating Narragansett Bay in a canoe.

The "home affairs," respecting which Providence so jealously withheld all participation from the General Court, are interesting rather from the minute scale of adjustment which served the needs of this young body politic than from the intrinsic importance of the details involved. Divisions and readjustments of lands, whether in behalf of public or private interests, went merrily forward. The surveyor must have been a busy man, and it is not surprising that he brought up his eldest son to follow the same trade. The first town surveyor was Chad Brown, whose home lot was situated at the foot of the present College Street. He it was who drew up the list of the home lots and the meadows from which our knowledge of these properties is obtained. He came to Providence, with his family, in 1638, was one of the little company who in that same year set out to walk "in the Baptists Way," and two years later served as one of the four men to draw up the "scheme of Arbitration" for the government of the town. Roger Williams speaks of his services in bringing "the after-comers and the first twelve to a oneness by arbitra-

tion." He died at some time previous to 1650, and was buried on his home lot, where the court-house now stands. On his widow's death, in 1672, the home lot came into the possession of the oldest son, John, also a surveyor and a Baptist elder. John, being comfortably settled in his own home at the north end of the Towne Street, sold the homestead to his brother James, then living in Newport. On the same day, James, in turn, resold the lot to Daniel Abbott, reserving only the family burying-ground. Daniel Abbott plays a loquacious if not precisely a conspicuous part in the town affairs of the later seventeenth century. Over one hundred years afterwards, Chad Brown's descendants, John and Moses Brown, — two of the four brothers whose biography is well-nigh a history of the town of their day, — bought back a part of the old home lot, and presented it to Rhode Island College.

The town of the earlier Browns, however, knew not, and dreamed not, of colleges. The "taking-up" or transferring of home and house lots, "uplands," "spots of meadow," and "pieces of salt Marsh," with the rights and privileges thereto appertaining, absorbed the energy of the untiring land-traders, and their conveyances crowd the town records of the seventeenth century. Not a few of the early proprietors appear to have invested in the lands of the town, and held their property for a rise, or, at all events, they decided for reasons more or less sound to settle else-

where. These absentees were not regarded with unqualified approval, and practical evidence in favor of the thesis that the absentee is in the wrong was not long in presenting itself. In 1643 "it was agreed by the generall" — so runs the town record — that a "hom share of ground . . . allso . . . thre akers of madoe ground" should be assigned to a new proprietor, but with the following proviso — if he "be absant from the town above eightten monthes leving nither wife nor child heare the afor saide land shall fall in to the townes hand again."

The "townes hand" is equally evident in the compact signed in January, 1646, by the "twenty-five-acre men." These individuals, "having obteyned a free Grante of Twenty five Akers of Land a peece with Right of Commoning . . . doe thankfully accept of the Same; And heereby doe promise to yield Active; or passive Obedyence to the Authority . . . established in this Collonye . . . As alsoe not to clayme any Righte to the Purchase of the Said plantation; Nor any privilidge of Vote in Towne Affaires; untill we shall be received as free Men of the said Towne of Providence." Among the names of these humble and subordinate members of the community, who seem to have been admitted on probation, are several that will play a leading part in the near future. We find here Pardon Tillinghast, who subsequently became a prominent citizen, and a veritable pillar of strength to his Baptist fellow-worshippers. John

Clawson's name is here,—that protégé of Roger Williams, whose tragic end was long unique in the annals of the little town. And next but one to Clawson we find Benjamin Hearndon, on whom tradition fixed the curse of his murdered neighbor. Here, too, is Epenetus Olney, the thrifty innkeeper, before whose well-known hostelry stood a famous "liberty-tree," in the days when that type of forestry had become popular.

More important than any industrial development yet noted was the offer made in 1646 to John Smith, the former miller of Dorchester. This was to the effect that he should "have the valley wherein his house stands in case he set up a mill." The mill was accordingly "set up" on the west bank of the Moshassuc, near John Smith's home lot, which had doubtless been situated by the future mill-pond for the greater convenience of the miller and his calling. A bridge must have been built at about the same time. Such a structure is designated as "New-bridge" in 1651, when John Smith purchased a "6 acre Lot" nearby.

The John Smith who figures in this last transaction was the son of the first miller, whose widow appears to have made an agreement with the town, in 1649, to carry on her husband's business. John Smith the second served his neighbors in his professional capacity for some thirty-five years. The field of his operations embraced not only a grist-mill, but

a saw-mill as well. To his widow and ten children who survived him, he left a landed estate of more than three hundred acres, situated in different parts of the town, and varying greatly in value. Two daughters received, each, forty acres of land, while a third was given ten shillings, and it would be a rash man who should undertake to prove that the last-named child was ill-treated by this division. One half of the home estate, including the mill and her husband's interest in the saw-mill, went to his wife. The eldest son received a much larger share of the property than was given to his brothers, "upon Conditions that he fayle not to be helpe full to his mother to bring up the rest of his brothers and sisters, some of them being very young."

From the inventory of the personal property we learn something of the furnishings with which an average townsman surrounded his family in the last quarter of the seventeenth century. The house itself consisted of two rooms, a "lower Roome," and a "Chamber." In this last, the only pieces of furniture were "two bed studs with the beds and bedding to them belonging." In the room below were one bedstead and its furnishings, four chairs, "a chest with the Booke of Martirs in it, and an old Bible Some lost and some of it torne." For kitchen utensils there was a brass kettle, a small copper kettle, "an old broken Copper Kettle, a fryeing pan, a spitt, and a small Grater, a paile and a Cann, and 3 Iron Potts." Table-



ware was represented by "two Small old pewter platters, two Basons & thre porengers, two quart Glasses, severall wooden dishes, a wooden Bottle, some old trenchers, and foure old Spooones." The greater part of the estate of ninety pounds consisted, of course, of the mill, which was valued at forty pounds, and the interest in "the Saw mill adjoyneing, with the old Mill-stone," estimated at three pounds, ten shillings. Besides this there was live stock to the extent of one steer, two heifers, two bulls, five horses of varying and detailed attributes, and "16 swine great and small together."

The practical advantages of having one's corn ground at home instead of at Newport, and carrying the bags to the mill over dry planks rather than through the ford, must have seemed small and prosaic to the farmers of Providence in comparison with the dazzling future unfolded to their imaginations, when, in 1648, "a Generall bruit" was "noysed throwout the Colonies . . . Scituated in these parts of America, of a Mine Discovered within the Jurisdictions . . . of Providence plantations which is Suggested to be GOLD." The reality did not, however, make good the above "Suggestion." A year later, it is true, Roger Williams wrote from his trading-post at Cawcawmsquissick to Governor Winthrop: "Sir, concerning the bags of ore, it is of Rhode Island, where it is certainly affirmed to be both gold and silver ore, upon trial." But alas! Further examination

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dispelled this pleasing delusion, and the Rhode-Islanders, perforce, again turned their attention to ploughshares and fruit trees.

The house, or trading-post, at Cawcawmsquissick is entitled to more than a passing mention. In 1637, an enterprising pioneer, Richard Smith by name, came into the Narraganset country, — “a most acceptable inhabitant, and a prime leading man in Taunton and Plymouth colony,” said Roger Williams of this new arrival. Smith had left “faire possessions” in England, in the county of Gloucester, when he adventured to America that he might enjoy liberty of conscience. Finding the theological limitations of the Pilgrim Fathers unprofitable for his soul’s welfare, he journeyed to Narraganset, where he settled near the present Wickford, “erected a house for trade, and gave free entertainment to travellers.” The site for his trading-post was well chosen. It was close to the Pequod Path, “the great road of the country,” and just north of Wickford Harbor.

Smith was certainly “a prime leading man” in the way of trade. Having successfully established a post in the Narraganset country, where he was “Courteous to all Strangers passing that way,” he became a partner in a similar enterprise within the Dutch territory of Long Island, where his cause prospered until the Indian raids drove all settlers in those parts to take refuge at New Amsterdam. But even this misfortune was not without a certain measure of mitiga-

tion, for the Indian warriors' torch that reduced to ashes the trading-house of Richard Smith may fairly be said to have lighted another fire of happier omen. The enforced and temporary residence of the trader and his family at New Amsterdam was cheered and enlivened by the marriage of his youngest daughter, Catherine, to Doctor Gysbert op Dyck or Updike, for by this revised version the family name was known to succeeding generations. On the death of his father-in-law, Doctor Gysbert and his children obtained a goodly share of the family estate at Wickford. The old Updike house, near that pleasant little country town, stands on the site of Richard Smith's block-house. The earlier building was burned by the Indians in the course of King Philip's War.

Smith's first purchase from the Indians probably amounted to some eighteen or twenty square miles. There he and his son, Richard, Junior, did a thriving business, and to this neighborhood Roger Williams betook himself, on his return from England with empty pockets, and slight prospects of filling them from any more substantial token of regard than appreciative votes, on the part of his "loving friends and neighbors" of Providence Plantations. His trading-house was perhaps a mile distant from that of the Smiths, and there for six years he lived and prospered, providing moral and religious nutriment for the souls of his Narraganset friends, as well as foes,

coats, beads, and other essentials to their social and economic well-being.

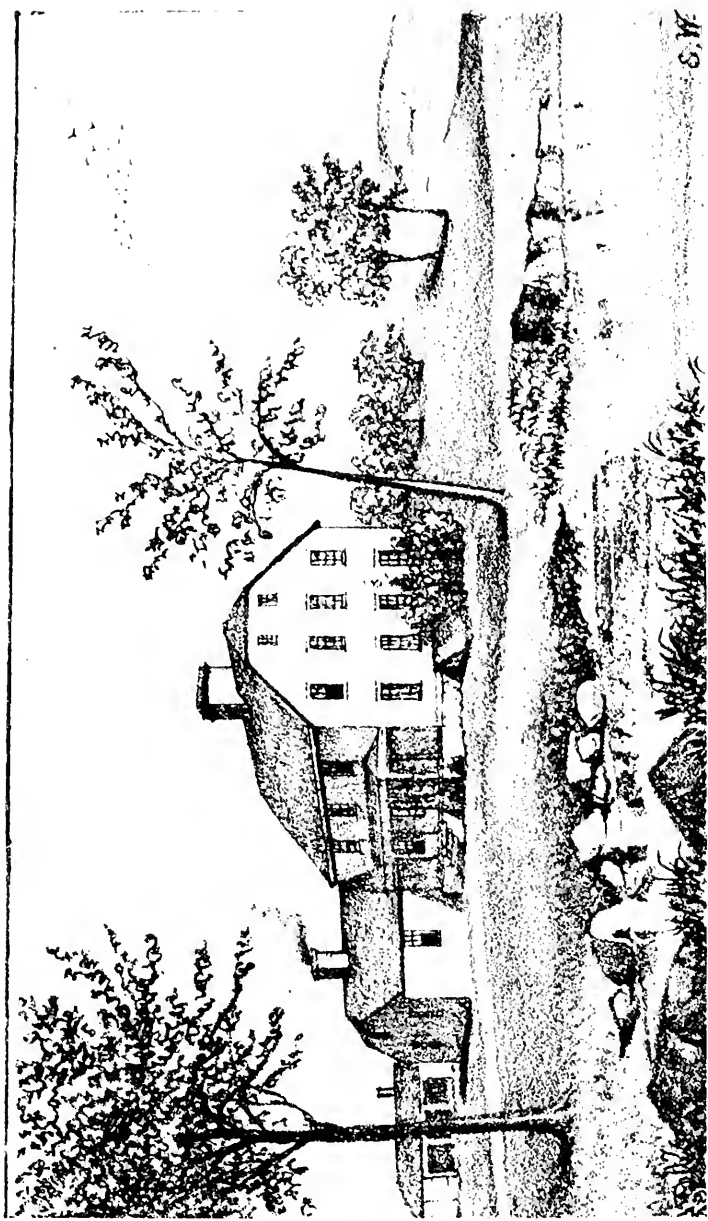
These were busy years, crowded with the details of farming, trading, preaching, and teaching, and also with a voluminous correspondence, in the midst of which appears a never-flagging interest in all that concerns the town of Providence. The one hundred pounds cheerfully voted him by the grateful colony in its first General Court was so long in transit that we find the expectant recipient suggesting, in 1651, that since he has "through God's providence conveniencye of improving some goats, the payment of it" might be "in cattle of that kind." The social amenities of a trading-post are signified in his gift of "2 small papers of pins" to Mrs. Winthrop, "that if she want not herself, yet she may pleasure a neighbor." "Sir," he writes at another time, "if you have Carpenter's Geography, or other discourse about the Earth's diurnal motion, spare it a little." Again, he sends directions for the use of hay-seed: "It is best to sow it upon a rain preceding. . . . Sow it not in an orchard, near fruit trees, for it will steal and rob the trees, etc." It was from his trading-house, too, that Roger Williams made his sad last journey to "Canonicus the great Sachem of the Narragansetts, the true Lord of this whole Countrey," whose eyes he was "sent for to close up and did."

The even tenor of life on the Great Salt River and in the Narraganset country was rudely interrupted in

RICHARD SMITH BLOCK-HOUSE AT COCUMSCUSSUC

Constructed by Richard Smith, Jr., about 1680, partly from the materials of the old garrison house. From a drawing in Whitefield's *Homes of our Forefathers in Rhode Island*, 1882.









the late summer of 1651 by the astonishing and most disconcerting announcement of a separation — nay, a rending in twain — of the very fabric of the colonial body politic. For there appeared to the settlers William Coddington of Newport, bringing a patent from the Council of State in England, whereby he was created governor of the islands of Rhode Island and Conanicut for life. The audacity of such a project, backed by its apparent success, must have dealt a staggering blow to the confidence with which the Rhode-Islanders had pursued their several callings under the protection of the Earl of Warwick's patent.

No sooner had the stroke fallen, however, than a counter-stroke was resolved upon. The towns of Providence and Warwick hastened to place themselves on record as “imbodyed & incorporated as before, by virtue of our Charter,” and they forthwith appealed to Roger Williams, soliciting him to betake himself to England, “to endeavor the renewing of their liberties”; for it seems to have been assumed by the colonists that the patent of 1644 was annulled by virtue of the grant to Coddington. If ever help was asked in vain of Roger Williams the fact has thus far eluded observation. On this occasion he disposed of the Cawcawmsquissick trading-post to his neighbor, Richard Smith, for fifty pounds in ready money, and if — as he says in one of his later letters — the profits were one hundred pounds per year, the worthy Smith must have made a pretty penny by the transaction.

Permission was obtained from Massachusetts to sail from the port of Boston. With Williams went Doctor John Clarke, on behalf of a large and discontented minority of the inhabitants of Newport and Portsmouth, with instructions to obtain, if possible, a decree annulling the Coddington grant.

John Clarke, the well-known physician and philanthropist of Newport, was destined to spend twelve years in England, before his mission was brought to a successful close. Although it proved a comparatively easy matter to obtain an order placing Coddington's patent in abeyance, a time and opportunity for the rehearing of the whole question were not so readily come by, in those stirring days when Parliament and the future Lord Protector were on such terms of bitter disagreement that the application of the sword to the Gordian knot was felt by all men to be but a matter of days.

Sir Henry Vane was again approached in the colony's behalf, and once more proved himself an invaluable friend and ally. "The sheet-anchor of our ship is Sir Henry," wrote Roger Williams to the towns of Warwick and Providence, "and he faithfully promised me that he would observe the motion of our New England business, while I staid some ten weeks with his lady in Lincolnshire . . . remember I am a father and a husband," the letter continues; "I have longed earnestly to return with the last ship . . . yet I have not been willing to withdraw my shoulders from

PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM CODDINGTON

From original portrait in Court House at Newport.







the burthen, lest it pinch others, and may fall heavy upon all. . . . If you conceive it necessary for me still to attend to this service, pray you consider if it be not convenient that my poor wife be encouraged to come over to me, and to wait together . . . for the end of this business. . . . I write to my dear wife my great desire of her coming while I stay, yet left it to the freedom of her spirit, because of the many dangers.”

A year earlier he had despatched an epistle to his wife which is probably unique in the annals of marital correspondence. In this extraordinary document the “recovery” of “his Wife M.W. . . . from a dangerous sicknesse” serves as the text for a sermon, or “Discourse,” of almost twenty thousand words, entitled “Experiments of Spiritual Life and Health and their Preservatives.” And yet, despite theological phraseology and involved argument, the heartfelt sincerity and affection of the opening sentences to his “Dearest Love and Companion in this Vale of Tears” give us a delightful glimpse of the tender husband and father.

“My dear Love,” he writes, “since it pleaseth the Lord so to dispose of me, and of my affairs at present, that I cannot often see thee, I desire often to send to thee. I now send thee that which I know will be sweeter to thee than the Honey and the Honey-combe, and stronger refreshment than the strongest wines or waters, and of more value then if every line and letter

were thousands of gold and silver. . . . I send thee (though in Winter) an handfull of flowers made up in a little Posey, for thy dear selfe, and our dear children, to look and smell on, when I as the grasse of the field shall be gone, and withered." At this point the theologian comes to the front, and without further loss of time plunges into a disquisition on the nature of the "inner man," under three "heads" and thirty-four "arguments." Most assuredly this diet would seem "strong refreshment" to a convalescent of the twentieth century. Let us trust that Mary Williams was both invigorated and edified by the tonic so elaborately prepared for her delectation.

Upon Vane's retirement from public affairs, in 1654, the prospect of immediate action became so little encouraging, and his own pecuniary resources were so far from adequate for his needs, that Williams decided to leave the matter of the charter in John Clarke's hands, and to return to Providence. Although hearty expressions of gratitude and appreciation had reached him from home, it is a sad fact that if remittances came at all, they were few and far between, notwithstanding that the town of Providence stood committed by its records "to pay the hundred pounds that is dew to him and a hundred pounds more." We know that he gave lessons in London to "two young gentlemen, a Parliament man's sons, as we teach our children English, by words, phrases, and constant talk," etc. "Grammar rules,"



it seems, were even at that early date "esteemed a tyranny."

A perusal of the "town papers" shows among the items submitted in June, 1652, eighteen pounds "paid to Mr. Roger Williams," and five pounds more "to his wife since he went to England." This substantial token of appreciation was soon followed across the Atlantic by a letter from the General Court, in which Roger Williams was informed that "it might tend much to the weighing of men's mindes, and subjecting of persons who have been refractory" if he were himself appointed governor of the colony by the home authorities. But no sooner was the proposal despatched than, with one accord, it was regretted, and in the next session of the Court — three months later — it was voted to be "contrarie to the liberties and freedom of the free people of this Collony, and contrarie to the end for which the sayd Roger Williams was sent." Happily for "the sayd Roger Williams," the ends for which he strove were not those of a Coddington.

William Dyer, who appeared at Newport, in 1652, with an order annulling Coddington's patent, proved to be anything but a messenger of peace. For two more weary years recriminations were busily exchanged between the towns of the island and those of the mainland. The declaration of war with the Dutch caused a passing diversion, but proved to offer opportunity for further difference of opinion rather than

for that union in which is strength. Warwick and Providence learned with consternation that commissions "tending to war" had been "granted and given" by Portsmouth and Newport to John Underhill, Edward Hull, and William Dyer, "which is like, for ought we see, to set all New England on fire, for the event of war is various and uncertaine," they remonstrated. Whether the "Councill of States' direction . . . to offend the Dutch" was open to such warlike construction as the above was felt by the party of opposition to be more than doubtful. By May of the following year (1654) a junction with the island towns was effected for the transaction of current business. This preliminary union was followed in August by a formal meeting of commissioners from "the foure Townes upon the reunitinge of this Colonie of Providence Plantation," and in September the reunited colony elected Roger Williams, newly arrived from England, for their president.

The even more important rôle of peacemaker was first to be carried to a conclusion, and to that end some undiluted home-truths were plainly set forth. "It hath been told me that I labored for a licentious and contentious people," they were roundly told by the newly elected president; "it is said . . . that both sides wished that I might never have landed, that the fire of contention might have had no stop in burning. . . ." This, and more to the same effect, reinforced by a letter of stern rebuke from Sir Henry Vane, pro-

SIGNATURE OF ROGER WILLIAMS

As President of the Colony, November 2, 1654. From the original document in the Moses Brown Papers, vol. 18, p. 67, in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

Stacy in an interview.

As President of the College, Stacy was the original owner of the building. The building was built in 1871, and the building was the first building of the College.

Dorchester

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Whereas the Late Court of Commissioners  
themselves untill y<sup>e</sup> present y<sup>e</sup> Assistants  
call them & y<sup>e</sup> Father left it to y<sup>e</sup> pleasure of  
Towns, to send three for six or any other number  
chosen. And whereas we see a great necessity  
of a better Regulation of our Lawes, some  
examination of a Committee as also of a more  
Spadic Course of making y<sup>e</sup> Consalants & Grantees  
of the Colonies. We have sent a Court of  
Deputies & Committee to be held at Dorchester  
14 of the instant Novemb<sup>r</sup> being y<sup>e</sup> 20 of y<sup>e</sup> week  
or Tuesday

In order to which y<sup>e</sup> name of y<sup>e</sup> Towns since  
the Court of W. Wane & require each Town  
to send three for six or any other number  
y<sup>e</sup> Town to attend the Court except you  
please to make a new choice, except

For y<sup>e</sup> Town of  
Providence

Roger Williams. Clerk  
Esmond, Sarsfield, Topham  
John R. Poome Assistant  
Benedict Arnold Assistant  
Councillor Sarsfield



duced a chastened frame of mind in the townspeople of Providence, who describe themselves as "an outcast and despised people . . . greatly disturbed and distracted by the ambition and covetousness of some amongst us," whose hope it is that posterity "shall read in our town records your pious and favourable letters and loving kindness to us, and this our answer, and real endeavor after peace and righteousness." And indeed peace, if not righteousness, endured between the towns of the colony for the two years and a half during which Roger Williams filled the office of president. Although Coddington did not explicitly abandon his assumption of executive powers until the spring of 1656, when he "publicly professed" submission to the authority of the Lord Protector, a general sense of the futility of his position had, long before, quieted public apprehension.

A much greater amount of uneasiness was experienced in the town of Providence at the disturbing prospect of "making war upon the Dutch," with whom the settlement had always maintained friendly relations, and through whose enterprising traders a large part of her supplies were obtained. Nevertheless, since hostilities seemed imminent, a "Traine band" was organized, officered by a "Liutenant, Ensigne, Sergeant," two "Corporalls," and a "Clerke," the latter's duties, evidently, to consist of listing "the Fines from absent souldiers," who were to pay two and sixpence for each offence. In the following year

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the penalty for absence was decreed to be “2s. or nothing as the generall & Towne Officers or chiefe commander in the Band shall thinke meete.” Notwithstanding this apparent loosening of the bonds of military discipline, measures were taken to provide a “Maugazine of armes and amunition in the Towne.”

Fears of an Indian outbreak were doubtless responsible, in part at least, for these displays of martial ardor. Scarcely had Roger Williams reached the Providence Plantation when his diplomatic talents were exerted to mend a breach between Massachusetts and the Narraganset Indians. For some months Ninigret, “the proud and fierce” sachem of the Nyantics, whose headquarters were at Pawcatuck, now Westerly, stood in danger of an attack from the troops of the Bay Colony. The danger was averted, but its traces may be seen in such enactments as that permitting one man to be left at home on training-days on “those Farmes which are one mile off the Town alone,” and in the strict orders issued to prevent selling ammunition to the Indians, who were, nevertheless, “filled with artillery and ammunition from the Dutch, openly and horridly, and from all English over the country (by stealth),” — to quote the indignant words of Roger Williams to the Court of Magistrates, at Boston.

Another precaution was the appointment of two “ordinarie keepers in each Towne, for the preventing of the great mischiefe of Indian drunkenness.” They



were to have the sole right to sell liquor to any one, English or Indian, in less quantities than one gallon, and further, in the case of an Indian, the amount of spirituous refreshment to be obtained at the ordinary was limited to one quarter of a pint "of liquers or wine a day." Nor was this by any means the extent of the regulation of the liquor traffic. The price at retail was fixed, "not to exceed four shillings a quart, at peage [wampum] six per pennie"; and all liquors were ordered "recorded in the Towne records," on penalty of forfeiture. Lastly, an excise was established for the benefit of the town treasury.

The local method of replenishing the town purse at Providence had heretofore been a rate levied on the live stock of various sorts, such as that of 1649, when "the Constable of the Town" was ordered "to levy and gather 3*d.* for Cows 1*d.* for Swine and 1*d.* pr Goat for Common Charges." Since at the same meeting it was deemed fitting that the constable should have "a staffe made him whereby he shall be knowne to have the authority of the Towne-Constable," it may not be amiss to assume that in his position as tax-gatherer "a staffe" would carry with it a certain amount of practical authority to which the cows and goats might prove amenable, in case their owners should be disposed to parley. The earliest "towne rate" extant in the Providence records is that of 1650. Fifty-one tax-payers are listed, whose total assessment amounts to fifty-six

pounds, five shillings. Two men among these pay three pounds and over. Two pay a fraction over two pounds. One pays five pounds. This last was Benedict Arnold, who subsequently removed to Newport, where his stone mill has proved a treasure-house of conjecture, alike for the critical scholar and the legend-loving poet.

In a community whose property chiefly consisted of pasture lands and the cattle which fed on them, we should expect to find an abundance of hides, both raw and cured, and, presently, tanyards and the leather trades. It is in accordance with this natural development along the line of least resistance that we observe Edward Inman selecting a home lot "convenient . . . for his trade of dressing fox Gloves," in 1652. A few years later, "Tho; Olnie Junr his house Lot" was to be "layd out by the Stompers," as he had requested, "provided he follow Taning." "The Stompers" was a street, or lane, which entered the Towne Street from the west at a point near the northern extremity of that main artery of the village life. It followed the brow of a short hill, or bluff, above the river, and then plunged down, by a somewhat steep descent, to the bridge by the mill. The old thoroughfare still exists, as Stampers Street, but its grade is, of course, much altered. In the middle of the seventeenth century it marked the centre of the public life of the settlement, and as such was suggested as a suitable place for a block-house, should

this refuge prove necessary in the event of open hostilities between the New-England colonies and the Indians. This threatened peril was happily averted, and another generation grew to manhood ere the traditional friendship of the Narragansets failed to shield the Providence Plantation.

The welcome tidings of peace with the Dutch was shortly followed by the announcement of Cromwell's death, and that fateful piece of news proved but the prelude to a greater change; the King was to enjoy his own again. With laudable zeal the colony of Providence Plantation kept well abreast of the times, and offered congratulations and expressions of loyal devotion to each arbiter of its fate, in turn. The trustworthy John Clarke received a renewal of his commission as agent, that he might appear duly accredited in the eyes of the new dispensation, and to his industry and sagacity the colony owed her new charter, issued in 1663. Thirteen years of residence in England, the last two of which had been filled to satiety with the formalities of official negotiation, not unmingled with a certain amount of back-stairs intrigue, had reduced the estimable physician's resources to a pitiable condition. He was forced to borrow money by mortgaging his estates at Newport, and although the grateful colony, on being informed of his need, promptly voted "that the first thing that shall be pitched on and agitated shall be how to rouse supplies for Mr. John Clarke," and forthwith passed

a resolution to send him one hundred pounds "by the first shipe that goes," and to "save him harmless in his estate," there is but too good reason to fear that two thirds of the amount due was never paid.

The new charter was received with every demonstration of respect. "Att a very great meeting and assembly of the freemen of the Collony of Providence Plantations, at Newport," in the November of 1663, the charter was "taken forth and read . . . in the audiance and view of all the people; . . . and . . . the letters with His Majestyes Royall Stampe, and the broad seale, with much becoming gravity held up on hygh, and presented to the perfect view of the people, and then returned into the box and locked up by the Governor, in order to the safe keeping of it." To the expectant listeners before whom this guaranty of their privileges was read aloud, the most important clause was probably that which declares that no man shall be "any wise molested punished disquieted or called in question for any differences of opinion in matters of religion." From that time to this, unchallenged and unquestioned, the "livelie experiment . . . that a flourishing civill State may stand and best be maintained . . . with a full liberty in religious concernments," has been "set forth," and has extended throughout a commonwealth prosperous beyond the wildest dreams of its bold pioneers, and reaching from the Atlantic coast of their early struggles to the South Seas of their brightest visions.

In the nature of things a royal charter embodied, for Englishmen, a distinct and venerated authority, which it was not in the temperament of the average man to disregard. Under this, new influence the colony insensibly changed its attitude on public questions, and on the whole it may be said that from this time the tendency — in spite of many reactionary episodes — was to unify, to grow together, and to realize a common responsibility to work under a common authority for the well-being of the community as a whole.



## Chapter III

### ROGER WILLIAMS AND THE TOWN OF PROVIDENCE — KING PHILIP'S WAR

THE brief period of Roger Williams's service as president of the plantation he had founded, marks the beginning of a new phase in the relation between himself and the town of Providence. He returned from England in 1654 to find the little colony in a condition closely bordering on anarchy. Liberty had become license. Every man did as seemed best for his own interests, with small regard for those of his neighbor. A disposition to settle disputes by the summary method of a street-fight rather than by the arbitration of a town-meeting, grew apace. Samuel Gorton had filled the office of president of the colony during part of the turbulent years when Williams was absent in England, and Gorton was a man whose recriminative talents shine forth conspicuously, even in that age and country. Yet Gorton publicly declared himself unable to stem the tide of argument and vituperation which he was forced to encounter. "Such men are fittest for office in this place," he wrote to his "Worthie friends" of Providence, "That can with most ease undergoe the greatest Load of Ignominy and Reproach, of which for my own Part, I am incapable."

TITLE-PAGE OF SAMUEL GORTON'S "SIMPLICITIES  
DEFENCE AGAINST SEVEN-HEADED POLICY"

From the original in the library of the Rhode Island  
Historical Society.





# *SIMPLICITIES DEFENCE*

against

## *SEVEN-HEADED POLICY.*

OR

A true complaint of a peaceable people, being  
part of the English in New England, made unto the State  
of Old England, against cruell persecutors

*United in Church-Government*  
in those parts.

Wherein is made manifest the manifold out-rages  
cruelties, oppressions, and taxations, by cruell and close im-  
prisonments, fire and sword, deprivation of goods, Lands, and live-  
lyhood, and such like barbarous inhumanities, exercised upon the  
people of Providence plantations in the Nanhyganset Bay by those of the  
Massachusetts, with the rest of the united Colonies, stretching themselves  
beyond the bounds of all their own Jurisdictions, perpetrated and acted  
in such an unreasonable and barbarous manner, as many  
therchy have lost their lives.

As it hath been faithfully declared to the Honourable  
Committee of Lords and Commons for Forraign Plantations,  
whereupon they gave present Order for Redress.

The sight and consideration whereof hath moved a great  
Country of the Indians and Natives in those parts, Princes and  
people to submit unto the Crown of England, and earnestly to sue to the  
State thereof for safeguard and shelter from like cruelties.

*Imprimatur, Aug. 3<sup>d</sup>. 1646.* Diligently perused, approved, and  
Licensed to the Presse, according to Order by publicke Authority.

*L O N D O N.*

Printed by *John Macock*, and are to be sold by *George Whitting-*  
*ton* at the blue *Anchor* neer the Royal *Exchange* in  
*Cornhill.* 1647.



Roger Williams appeared among his fellow-townsmen, in the midst of their distractions and contentions, with all the prestige which his services in their behalf and his influence with those high in authority, could bestow. These advantages of his position, and his never-failing tact as an arbitrator, speedily brought about no small measure of peace. In the nature of things, it was to be expected that the pendulum would presently swing in the opposite direction, and it was not many months before the reactionary temper of the people was made manifest in several small incidents of the local administration. The leader of the opposition was William Harris, a man whom Roger Williams utterly distrusted and disliked, but whose practical ability was sufficient to secure him a considerable following. Harris was now living at Pawtuxet. His first aggression took the form of a pamphlet attacking the fundamental principles of law and order, and this in sufficiently explicit terms to lead Williams to accuse him of high treason. The court failed to substantiate the charge, and the matter was shelved by a reference to the colony's agent in England, John Clarke.

While Harris was maturing his strategic plans for the next manœuvre, the missionary zeal of the Quakers was forced on the attention of the General Court by a letter from the Puritan colonies, requesting the coöperation of Rhode Island in the attempt to stamp out this new and "most pestilential" heresy.

The reply sent back by President Benedict Arnold and his assistants is well known: "We have no law to punish any for only declaring by words their minds . . . concerning . . . the ways of God as to Salvation and an eternal condition"; and to this declaration of principle was added a counsel of expediency: "in those places where these people . . . are most of all suffered to declare themselves freely . . . there they least of all desire to come."

Contrary to the anticipations thus expressed by President Arnold, the Quakers not only "desired to come" to the Providence Plantation, but once there, they stayed, prospered, and made a goodly number of converts. Catherine, the wife of Richard Scott, who has already figured in the religious history of the colony, now became a Quaker, and made her way from Providence to Boston, to "bear testimony." She was followed by many others, and as the tide of missionary zeal swelled until it reached the point of fanaticism, the punishments meted out to the transgressor within the Bay Colony's jurisdiction became proportionately brutal and inhumane. To Roger Williams, fresh from his sad experience of the disorders rife in a community where every man is a law to himself, it appeared evident that the outbursts of fanaticism referred to might easily become subversive of all civil authority; while the harmless departure from certain social customs, offensive to the Quakers, must have seemed to him a step in the same

direction. He accordingly took an immediate and decided stand against the Quaker doctrine of the "inner light," and in the heat of his controversy with George Fox — at a later period of his career — declared "that a due and moderate restraint and punishment" of such "incivilities" as disrespect towards one's superiors, and the use of "thee" and "thou" in conversation, was "far from persecution," and even "a duty and commandment of God." So different is the point of view of the man who conducts a government from his who leads an opposition. There can be no doubt, however, that the Quakers had the sympathy and respect of the greater part of the plantation. Especially was this true of Newport, where the larger share of such prosperity and cultivation as existed in the colony was to be found. From the beginning, the influence of the Quakers grew steadily, and they had many sympathizers among those who did not profess their faith, as, for example, our old friends, Samuel Gorton and William Harris.

This was the state of affairs when, in the closing months of 1660, there began the long and furious controversy over the "Pawtuxet purchase." The General Court had given permission to the town of Providence "to purchase a little more [land] not exceeding three thousand acres." Thereupon William Harris promptly obtained the so-called confirmatory deeds, or conveyances, from the Narraganset sachems, in which the phraseology of the

grant of 1639 was so interpreted as to include some three hundred thousand acres outside the town boundaries as originally laid down. To this transaction the town of Providence took no exception, but, on the contrary, proceeded "to sett the Boundes of our plantation," in accordance with the new grant, "Twenty miles from foxes hill Westward up in the Countrey." To a letter of protest from Roger Williams, written in behalf of his Indian friends, the town returned an answer "Drawne up" by three men, of whom William Harris was one, to the following effect: "wee know, that if wee lett goe our True hold already Attained, wee shall (if not ourselves, yett our posteretye) Smart for itt, and wee conceive herein that wee doe Truely understand what your Selfe doth not, And if your Aprehension take place, as wee hope it never will, in those your proposalls, Wee happely may See what wee conceive You desire not, the Ruine of what you have given name to (viz) poore providence."

Here this particular matter rested for some seven years. The conservative policy just set forth did much to diminish Roger Williams's popularity, and is probably accountable for certain acts and orders of the town-meeting whereby the measure of reproof and admonition with which the apostle of religious liberty had striven to turn his neighbors from their evil courses, was meted out to him again.

Shortly after the correspondence just quoted, the

case of William Burrows came up for consideration. William Burrows had been a freeman of Providence for over twenty years. He signed the agreement of 1640. He was taxed in the rate of 1650, and he once in a while served as town juror. Whether through illness, or old age, — perhaps both, — he became unable to carry on the business of his farm, and in 1655 he sold “his whole parcell of Meadow . . . and six acres of upland lying together at Newbridge” to Thomas Arnold, on these terms, — that Arnold should pay him forty shillings yearly, so long as he (Burrows) should live, “live he longer, or die sooner at the good pleasure of God.” The form of payment was to be as follows: “The first thirteene shillings and foure pence in Labour of ploughing or Carting or some of both; secondly the said summe 13s. 4d. in English Corne Wheat or Rye, or some of both as the price shall be Currant at Providence after harvest; & the said summe of 13s. 4d. in swine’s flesh, at killing time before Winter.” To this agreement the name of Roger Williams is signed as witness.

Three years later, two cows belonging to Burrows were turned over to Henry Redock, in present payment of a debt of eight pounds, and, on his side, Redock agreed to furnish Burrows “15s. yearly in Butter and Cheese at the comon price,” during Burrows’s lifetime. Furthermore, at Burrows’s death his “Three Score Acors of Land, And Meddow at neutaconkonitt” were to go to Redock’s son, and

“his movables and Debtes” to Redock’s daughter, and in conclusion, “the Said Henry Redock hereby ingageth himselfe, and his heirs to provide conveniently for the Buriall of the Said William Burrowes.” And here again, Roger Williams acted as witness.

From the letter written by the town, two years afterward (1660), it is evident that Roger Williams had been put in charge of the Burrows estate, whether by the town or not does not appear. It is also evident that the detailed arrangements so carefully stipulated in the documents quoted had failed to meet all the emergencies of the case. Consequently, Williams, and others as well, called on the town to come forward and provide more satisfactorily for the poor man. The town took up the case, and “having no Knowledg how Matters Stood with his Estate,” sent for Roger Williams, who “came not,” but sent a copy of the agreement with Redock, “which was no Satisfaction.”

Thereupon the townspeople, in their meeting assembled, took upon themselves with no little zest the rôle of mentor, and proceeded to indite a letter of reproof to Roger Williams, in a tone of high moral superiority. “As for your paper we are Sorrey to See Such unwise passages, That a debt due after death Should be payde out of his Estate whilst hee is yett living is [in] A manner as wee conceive takeing Bread out of his mouth, for wee judge it the princeple of his lively hood, And wee thinke if it had benn well



managed might have given A good Stroake to his maintenance, And wee judg the Law will make them Keepe him while hee is living, that Should have his Revenewes when hee is dead; only one thing wee well perceive is taken care for (*viz*) an honorable Buriall, but wee find but little honorable care for his Livelyhood; Sir wee desire you would take all in good part, wee intend no Evile but willing to give A hint as we find it, we Rest: Yor Lo: Neighbours.”

It may be that the Redock family were able to defy the law, even in the face of their prospective enjoyment of the “Revenewes” of the Burrows estate. Certain it is that they make no further appearance in the town records. A home for Burrows was found with Roger Mowry, the “ordinary keeper” in Providence, whose license bound him to maintain a bed for the entertainment of strangers, and whose hospitality was at the service of every man whose charge was paid, whether by himself, or his residuary legatees, or the town rates. In the present instance an agreement was made “with the Towne to Keepe him,” and for two years all went well. Then it is probable that the payments of the stipulated annuity of grain, pork, butter, and cheese ran behind, for in October, 1663, the town deputies were instructed to “goe unto all Inhabetantes . . . to see what will be Freely Contributed towards the reliefe of William Burrows.” And if this appeal to the liberality of the townspeople should not result in the contribution of

“a considerable sum,” a town rate was to be levied for his support. Two months later all need for either rate or free contribution was past. We are not informed if Henry Redock furnished the “honorable Buriall,” as previously agreed, but we do know that he received a communication from the town to the effect that “being making up all accountes concerning William Burrowes: They find Fifteene shillings to be due from you: They doe therefore herby demande the same sum desiring the speedy payment thereof.”

Contemporary with the affair of the Burrows estate was that of another property whose owner died intestate under circumstances that must have furnished food for gossip and conjecture by every fire-side in the township during the long winter evenings of 1661. Some early riser, while crossing the common lands at the north end of the town, one cold December morning, saw before him the figure of a man lying across the well-trodden path, by the side of a thick clump of barberry bushes. He hurried forward to offer his help, lifted the prostrate form, and gazed, horror-stricken, into the well-known face of his neighbor, John Clawson the Dutchman. A terrible blow from a broad-axe had cloven his head from forehead to chin. Help was called, and the poor man was carried to his own house — but a short distance away — to die.

John Clawson was a Dutchman who had either

strayed into the Narraganset country from the Dutch settlements to the westward, or — and this seems more probable — had fallen into the hands of the Indians in some of their raids on the Dutch towns of Connecticut, or Long Island. At all events, Roger Williams gives the most detailed account of him, and Roger Williams says that he “sought him out (by Natives) and cherished him in his lost, naked and starving condition,” and further, that he was not only Clawson’s master, “and he my house hold servant by the yeare, but his school mr, giving him my Dutch Testament and spending much time to teach him to reade.” Just when all this took place we do not know, but it must have been at an early period in the annals of the plantation, for in 1645 we find Clawson admitted to the fellowship of those subordinate members of the community, the “twenty-five acre men.”

Clawson was a carpenter by trade, and a long-headed, thrifty fellow by habit and disposition. Skilled workmen were few and far between in that pioneer settlement, and we are probably justified in assuming that the Dutchman could earn a better livelihood at his handicraft than by scratching at the sandy soil of Providence Neck in hope of a more or less precarious harvest. This fact will account for the record of 1659, asserting that he “for good Consideration . . . hath sold unto Richard Prey of Providence . . . all his Clayme, Right, and Tytle that he hath from the towne of Providence Excepting his

house Lott, or share of Land lieing next to Benjamin Hearnton," at the north end of the town.

Either Richard Pray failed to make good his part of the bargain, or Clawson was sufficiently forehanded to be able to secure a second tract of twenty-five acres within the next two years, of which he died possessed. For the sake of continuity we may assume the former alternative, and also that while the sale was pending, Clawson's fellow-townsmen — who seem to have been on far from friendly terms with him — insisted on a strict interpretation of his side of the agreement. At all events, whether through carelessness, ignorance, or pure disregard of his legal obligations, Clawson seems to have ignored the fact that the disposal of "all his Clayme, Right, and Tytle" debarred him from the use of the common. He owned a cow, which may have fed on the forbidden territory. For that, or some other equally valid reason, his law-abiding neighbors complained of him "for makeing use of the Common," and he was "forthwith forewarned" by the Quarter Court "to forbare in any wise to make use of any of the Common." That the Dutchman had reason to feel himself aggrieved is evident from Roger Williams's letter already quoted. Williams alludes to his quarrelling "upon Law matters," to "his Cow," etc., in "other men's hands," and to his "Folly and Forwardness," as well as to the "Helpe and Favour" Clawson had received from himself.

As a matter of course, the sufferer was cared for by his neighbors, the Hearndons, by his friend and patron, Roger Williams, and also his wife, and by others who came to share the vigil, to proffer advice, and to learn the story in all its harrowing details at first-hand. Although in a dying condition, Clawson lingered through the day, and as the long hours wore away he made piteous and almost hopeless efforts to speak. The only words that could be distinguished were these, "My master — my goods," over and over again, and no questioning could elicit anything further in the way of explanation. It was assumed by Roger Williams, and it seems to have been the first thought of those who helped to care for the dying man, that Clawson was trying to say that his master should have his goods, and on the strength of this assumption, Roger Williams applied for letters of administration. The townspeople did not, however, fully sympathize with his point of view. A hue and cry had been raised, and an Indian known as Waumanitt had been apprehended, — on just what grounds, does not appear. The town treasury was in an even more exhausted condition than usual, and the murdered man had left no relatives, while he had left a house and lot, "25 acres of upland," and certain personal effects. Under the circumstances, what could be more appropriate than that the estate of the victim should settle the bills incurred for the apprehension and punishment of his assassin?

The consensus of public opinion was doubtless to the effect that the resources and ingenuity of the community had been so sorely taxed in the effort to deal with the prisoner as befitted the dignity of the law, that it would be highly inconsiderate to demand a cash outlay, in addition to the toil and trouble already undergone. In accordance with this view of the case, the town ordered that "all ocations of disburstments concerning John Clawson which have already benn, or yett shall bee shall be payd out of the aforsaid John Clawson his Estate . . . and that the Said . . . Estate shall be desposed on by Tho: Olney Senior."

The "disburstments" incident to the custody of so important a criminal were many and unprecedented. There was no prison in Providence. In fact it is doubtful if there was a lock on anything larger than the lid to a chest. In this emergency, the blacksmith was called on to provide "irons," with which the prisoner might be confined. This he did, at a cost of three shillings and sixpence. With the criminal thus hampered, and watched day and night by a guard of stalwart yeomen, at three shillings a day per man, it was felt that well-meaning and law-abiding citizens were once more fairly secure. The town-meeting convened to deal with the matter resolved to send the prisoner to Newport, "to the Collony prison There to be kept until his tyme of Triall." The matter of transportation thither in-

volved, not only the services of a guard and boat's crew, who were provided with "1 pint of liquors to carry with them in the Boat," and "powder and Shott to carry along with the prisoner," but also "1 pint of liquors for the young men that lancht the Boat." Time was money, even in the seventeenth century, as is proved by the fact that the boatman, who "waited one day and the prisoner went not," received one shilling and sixpence. And in pursuance of this same illuminating principle, the boy who went "to find Will Carpenter" was paid a shilling. The cost of "warning the town about the prisoner" was three shillings. The landlord of the tavern, or ordinary, where the prisoner was lodged, brought in a bill for "house-room." There was also the matter of funeral expenses. A coffin, nails for the same, and "2 Drop lines," amounted to five and sixpence. "A sheete and Bread and Cheese," also "5 pints liquors for the Buriall," are duly entered among the items of expenditure. The neighbors who ministered to the wounded man received in all, £2. 19. 0. "Sack and sugar whilst he lay wounded" was forthcoming to the amount of seven shillings and threepence. His debts were paid, and came to thirteen shillings.

As for the prisoner, — whom we have seen "lancht" on his way to Newport, — deponent further saith not. There is no record of his arrival at "the Collony prison," nor of the return of the guard. In the absence of all definite information

respecting the true culprit and the motive for the crime, tradition took up the tale. According to this creditable source of information, a feud existed between Clawson and his neighbor, Benjamin Hearndon. It was Hearndon who lay in wait for his victim behind the barberry thicket, and felled him with his broad-axe, — not so quickly, however, but that Clawson, as he fell, recognized his assailant. When the efforts of his neighbors had roused him from the stunned condition in which he was brought home, he uttered a curse against the Hearndons, wishing that all of that name might be marked with split chins, and haunted by barberry bushes. “And,” said the gossips, “every one knows that the Hearndons have cleft chins to this day.”

It was not until June that Thomas Olney, Senior, was able to bring in his “Accountes . . . concerning the Estate of John Clawson deceased, What hee Received in, And what hee paid out.” Under the last-named heading belongs the item, “to my selfe for disburstments £1. 11. 2.”

In the mean time, Clawson’s personal property had been carefully inventoried, item by item, by two painstaking appraisers, one of whom was Thomas Olney, Junior. Their services were estimated at two shillings each. The most valuable of Clawson’s possessions was peage, or Indian shell-money, to the amount of £7. 13. 9. His winter supply of grain, “14 Bushells of Corne and Pease,” came to £3. 12. 2.



DOCUMENT OF 1669

Signed by William Carpenter, William Harris, Thomas Olney, Jr., Thomas Harris, Thomas Olney, Sr., and John Whipple. From the original in Moses Brown Papers, vol. 18, p. 69, in Rhode Island Historical Society.



His writing signifieth into all the inhabitants of the  
Town of Providence, That Edward Rellinton who was upon the  
first Monday of June last pay chosen Clerk for this Towne and  
now upon a voyage (and departing the Towne) hath delivered up  
the Office of Clerk to Edward Rellinton who was chosen Clerk  
in the Towne. Counsel of Providence whose names are as fol-  
loweth (who were upon the afore said first Monday in June  
last past chosen and appointed a Towne Counsel in which order  
(what were received) as forth coming for the use of the Towne  
and to be kept in a fair way for all way to be  
designed or delivered into the hands of him who shall be orderly  
chosen and appointed a Towne Clerk to officiate in the days  
office, and receive them.

Dated from the day  
of a receipt of the  
above which was  
the 3 day of January  
1669.

Witness at Providence  
Edward Rellinton Clerk

11th The 11th June 1669

Samuel Rellinton  
Thomas Rellinton  
John Rellinton



These items, and his kit of carpenter's tools, valued at £1. 15. 4, very nearly made up the sum total of the poor man's worldly goods. His twenty-five acres of upland were set down at £1. 10. 0, and the "howse and Lott" at twenty pounds. His administrator's balance-sheet shows £37. 17. 4 on the credit side of the account, and expenditures amounting to £38. 14. 0, "so that there Remaines due unto Tho: Olney £0. 16. 8: to be paid unto him, by Roger Williams," the town record concludes.

When the administration of Clawson's personal property was placed in the hands of the astute Thomas Olney, Senior, with instructions to "despose on" it, his real estate was turned over to Roger Williams, as residuary legatee, so to speak. This property consisted of "A howse Lott And Also the Land which Lieth neere unto a Salt Cove." The Dutchman's "howse & Lott" remained in Roger Williams's possession until 1669, when he sold them to Clawson's old neighbor, Benjamin Hearndon, for "the full Summe of Eleaven pounds of Currant Countrey pay," to be paid in three yearly instalments of five pounds, three pounds, and three pounds, respectively. The delivery was to be made "in Cloth and stockings, and Corne, and Aples, at the Comon and usuall price." Even under these conditions, which do not seem extraordinarily severe, it was not until the spring of 1675 that Hearndon's debt was cancelled.

Thomas Olney, Senior, who figures so prominently in the disbursements on account of the Clawson estate, was a man of considerable local importance in this early period of the town's history. And as the years roll by, it will be interesting to watch his descendants play their parts on an historic stage presenting a wider field of action. The first Thomas Olney came to Salem with his wife and children in 1635. Three years later, he was advised to depart from Massachusetts; and thereupon turned his steps towards Providence, where he arrived in time to be enrolled among the thirteen original proprietors. A few months afterwards he was found among the little group who formed the Baptist Church, and we are told by the historian of that denomination that after Roger Williams's withdrawal, Olney, as first elder, ministered to that "part of the Church who were called Five Principle Baptists." He signed the arbitration compact of 1640, although his subsequent career indicates that his belief in arbitration was theoretical rather than practical. He carried on the trade of a shoemaker, as well as that of a tanner, and was likewise a surveyor of much practical experience, as the town records abundantly testify.

As a proprietor of Providence, and one of the group of thirteen, subsequently known as "the Pawtuxet purchasers," Olney's interest led him to coöperate with William Harris, in the latter's endeavors to carry through his famous land deal so as

to bring the additional territory acquired by the confirmatory grant of 1659 into the possession of the Pawtuxet men. Olney's effective knowledge of political methods was gained by long experience in the service of both town and colony. It was during the interim when it seemed probable that the first charter might be annulled that his preference for the law of the primitive individual — that "he shall take who has the power, and he shall keep who can" — first found scope for action. In the first General Court of the reunited colony he was accused of a "risinge or takinge up of armes to the oposinge of authority." Whether this act of overt rebellion had any connection, direct or indirect, with the treasonable publication of his partner in the Pawtuxet purchase (William Harris), we are not told, but there is no doubt that both of these men, "and others," were implicated in the charge above specified. The affair is described in the town records as "a tumult and disturbance in the winter under a pretence of voluntarie training," concerning which there was "greate debate," at the time of writing. Through the pacific influence of Roger Williams, who acted as moderator in more than the technical sense of the word, "it was at last concluded . . . that for the Colony's sake . . . and for the publike union and peace sake it should be past By and no more mentioned."

"Union and Peace" served Roger Williams as a sufficient motive to ignore the past when dealing with

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a breach of law and order in the Towne Street, but a bit of legal trickery, amounting to nothing less than a land-grabbing scheme at the expense of the ignorant Indians who had trusted him and his friends, was to him an infamous wrong which cried aloud for justice, and which he was bound to oppose to the utmost extent of his ability. Backed by his townsmen, Gregory Dexter and Arthur Fenner, he so far succeeded in thwarting the combination led by Harris, in the proprietary interest, as to defeat every attempt to set off the town of Pawtuxet from that of Providence. Until this was done, the newly acquired lands could not be divided among the Pawtuxet purchasers, since the two settlements formed one township.

Gregory Dexter, who was formerly a stationer and printer of London, had been given a proprietor's lot on the Towne Street, at the extreme north end. He did not arrive at the settlement until 1640. Roger Williams's characterization of him as "a man of education, and of a noble calling, and versed in militaries," who "might well be moderator or general deputy or general assistant," but who "made a fool of conscience," is well known. That same eminent authority speaks of him elsewhere as "an intelligent man . . . and conscionable (though a Baptist) therefore maligned and traduced by William Harris . . . he hath a lusty team and lusty sons, and very willing heart (being a sanguine cheerful man)." He was not without rhetorical powers, and we are told



that he was a preacher before he came to America; nor was he wanting in political ability.

When acting as town-clerk, in 1653, Dexter exercised his literary gifts in the composition of a treatise entitled "An Instrument, or soveraign Plaister, to heale the many fold presant soares in this Towne or plantation of providence, wch do arise about our lands," and took advantage of his official position as keeper of the town records to insert this forcible statement of his views in their pages. In 1667, the document in question was gravely presented to a town-meeting, convened by the Fenner-Dexter faction, and solemnly ordered to be placed on the town records, — its unauthorized abiding-place for the previous fourteen years. The "Plaister" was promptly pronounced to be "poysonous" by Harris and his friends, and the author to be an "active leading Instruement" whose "underminings," as also those of Roger Williams and Arthur Fenner, are "breefly discovered" in a "declaration" of about two thousand words. A counterblast of indignant eloquence stigmatizes Harris's statement as a "notorious Slander," and the writer as one "who loveth strife."

In Arthur Fenner the Williams contingent possessed a shrewd and practical ally, whose words were few, and whose deeds bear out the above assertion. He was the eldest of three brothers, who are said to have been the sons of a Connecticut Indian trader.

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They came to Providence in or near 1647. Tradition credits Arthur Fenner with a lieutenant's commission in Cromwell's army, and there is little doubt that he had seen military service somewhere on the other side of the Atlantic. The display of military qualifications was not frequently required in his new home, but his decision of character and promptitude in action, not unmixed with a fair share of strategic ability, were quite as valuable assets in the colony's balance-sheet. In the time of King Philip's War he became Captain Arthur Fenner. Although he built a house on Providence Neck, on the property long known as "the Fenner estate," on the present Governor Street, his dwelling-place, for the greater part of the time while he lived in Providence, was on the west side of the Great Salt River. This "farm in the woods" was built, probably, in 1655, and stood in the present suburb of Cranston.

Matters regarding the Pawtuxet purchase tended slowly, and by no means peacefully, towards a crisis. A suit against the town of Warwick, followed by a rehearing, and that, in turn, by an action for trespass against a certain John Harrud, filled the colony courts with litigation; while a series of wrangles over the question of the dividing-line between Providence and Pawtuxet absorbed the time and energy of every town-meeting. At length Harris went to England, and obtained an order for a special court to try the case. The court sat in 1677, and gave a verdict in

Harris's favor. But the execution of that same verdict depended on Arthur Fenner, who was appointed to run the line of division between Providence and Pawtuxet. This he did, and so adroitly as to give to the Pawtuxet men precisely what they had been entitled to before the additional grants of 1659 were obtained.

The inevitable rehearing followed. Again Harris journeyed to London, and again he was successful. But when the time came for taking possession of the coveted territory, unforeseen obstacles and uncertain interpretations obliged the intrepid "purchaser" to cross the ocean a third time. This last unhappy voyage resulted in the loss of his cause, and ultimately of his life as well. The ship in which he sailed was taken by the Barbary pirates, her passengers were carried to Algiers, and there sold as slaves, to be held for ransom. The necessary sum was raised, but not until after a delay which reflected little credit on Harris's family, in the eyes of their contemporaries. Francis Brinley wrote from Newport to Mrs. Harris: "You and yours lie under the hard thoughts of many . . . by your refusing to comply with those that were stirred up to lay down their monies for that end." After a captivity of about a year, the ransom was paid, and the aged sufferer — then over seventy — set free. It was too late. The poor man was broken down by age and harsh treatment, and died within a few days of his arrival in London.

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After the disappearance of William Harris from the scene of action, the cause of the Pawtuxet purchasers died a natural death. At various times during the next twenty years petitions were brought to the notice of the Crown and its representatives, but no further action was taken in the matter. The words of the colony's agent, in 1705, state the condition of affairs symbolically, yet tersely. He says: "My lawyer tells me that he fears it [a new preparation of the case] will be like dressing a cucumber with oyle and vinegar, pepper and salt, and then throwing it upon the dunghill. That is to say, he doubts that when you have done all, the great length of time that this case has been depending (about 47 years) will be a stumbling block in your way never to be got over."

Long before the eighteenth century set in, matters had amicably adjusted themselves on the Towne Street of Providence. The valiant Captain Arthur had "tamed his heart of fire," and placed his chastened affections in the safe keeping of Howlong Harris, the daughter of the tenacious William, while the co-worker of Harris, the redoubtable Thomas Olney, Senior, had married his daughter Lydia to Joseph, the youngest son of his old antagonist, Roger Williams.

Howlong Harris was not only a capable and attractive young woman, but from a worldly point of view she was a match worthy the serious consideration of any man of thrift and foresight. Nor were there

lacking young men of sufficient discernment to be aware of the fact. In the early summer of 1681, the banns for her marriage with John Pococke, a lawyer of Newport, had been published. Evidently the form of consulting the young lady's parents had been omitted, for at this point her mother interfered and forbade the marriage, giving as a reason that she wished to consult her husband, then absent in England, regarding the matter. This stay in the proceedings proved, for some reason which we do not know, an insurmountable obstacle. Mrs. Harris died in the following year, but Howlong retained her maiden freedom until 1684 when she became Arthur Fenners's second wife. Nor did she come to the altar empty-handed. By her father's "last will and testament," drawn up just before his departure for England, his daughter Howlong was given one third of his farm of seven hundred acres, with meadows "thereto adjoyneing," and the prospect of another portion of the estate, on the death of her mother. The inventory of the testator's personal effects displays to us every article contained in the house and out-buildings. Nothing seems too trivial to engage the attention of the appraisers. If an object is of no value, that fact is formally stated, as "Severall refuse paper bookes not worth vallinging."

The farm of William Harris, one of the few well-to-do citizens of Providence, was, in 1682, stocked with two mares and one colt, six steers, three heifers,

two young cows, and one old cow. Farming-tools were there, to the extent of a plough, a grindstone, "2 old broad hoes, and one Narrow hoe," two shovels, and a spade. "Severall Stacks of hay Standing by the Meadow Side" form one of the larger items. The house furnishings were numerous and varied. Beds, bedsteads, and bedding are carefully designated. "1 Feather Bedd, and Bolster" was valued at £4. "1 Feather bedd and a bolster, old and much worne," £1. 5. 0. It must have been a stirring household, with little expectation of visitors, for in the entire dwelling there were but two chairs. A "settle Bedd studd" is mentioned as being "in the cellar," where we must suppose it would hardly serve for sitting accommodation. Perhaps the various chests, one "with a lock upon it," one described as "A little old sea Chest," and one "Coulered black," were pressed into service as the occasion demanded.

That centre of household activity, the kitchen, fared better. "2 Brasse Kettles, 1 old Brasse Kettle, A Copper porenger, one Iron Kettle, 1 fryeing pann," tongs, bellows, candlesticks, tubs, and pails are found. The table was set forth with wooden platters, trenchers, bowls, bottles, ladles, and spoons. Pewter was there, but not in profusion. "1 Earthen Pann" and "a Tinn pudding pan" appear. Drinks were served in a great variety of receptacles, whatever may be said of the beverages themselves. "1 pewter pottle pott, 1 wine quart pott, 1 Tanker quart pott,

PETITION DRAWN BY WILLIAM HARRIS, SEPTEMBER  
17, 1677, DIRECTED TO GOV. JOSIAH WINSLOW

From original in Harris Papers, p. 91, in Rhode Island  
Historical Society.





To v<sup>e</sup> Honnour Josiah Winslow Esquire Governor of his Majesties  
Colony of Newplimoth praying that some way by your appoint-  
ment as p<sup>re</sup>sent your self that William Randall of Abitha  
in v<sup>e</sup> Colony of Newplimoth may be summoned to appear at his Ma-  
jesties Court to be heard at presence v<sup>e</sup> third day of October next  
being the 14<sup>th</sup> day of August 1675 And 27<sup>th</sup> year of his  
Majesties Reign from thence upon doubt to answer Nathaniel Watson  
Thomas Hild & William Harvid of patent & providence in v<sup>e</sup> Colony  
of Newplimoth of demands in v<sup>e</sup> Colony of land wherefore  
v<sup>e</sup> William Randall tenant by lease & lorded by lease on about  
used & carved of v<sup>e</sup> Compaynents & Somersdowns land of patent wood-lands  
highlighted & lorded by m<sup>rs</sup> Dow on v<sup>e</sup> northern side of patent  
of patent river & on v<sup>e</sup> southward side of patent river a line  
between v<sup>e</sup> land of provident & v<sup>e</sup> land of patent to v<sup>e</sup> Eastward by  
upland upon tall of provident in v<sup>e</sup> month of March 1674  
ing v<sup>e</sup> Compaynents & demands & exporting them to the v<sup>e</sup> Savings  
of money paid having which fourth there to make the v<sup>e</sup> Complaint  
of v<sup>e</sup> four demands there & remittent there action of trespass against  
v<sup>e</sup> William Randall & pray Justice of v<sup>e</sup> Court. And that of m<sup>rs</sup>  
and waterman & Thomas Hild the v<sup>e</sup> Attorney in his own behalf  
complainant & defendant William Harvid  
17 of Sept 1675

2291 yds 50 c1



1 Tanker pint pott without a lidd, 1 old wine pint pot, 1 wine halfe pint pot, 1 Gill pot, and a half Gill pot, and 6 Glasse bottles," and a second "pewter pottle pott" would certainly suffice to dispense the "2 barrills of winter Sidar," and the "2 barrills of summer Sidar" which stocked the wine-cellar.

The really noteworthy item is, however, the books which belonged to Harris. He owned twenty-six volumes, and of these, eleven are works treating of law. Several are religious in tone, and others are distinctly secular. We find *The Gentleman jocky* elbowing *The Gospell preacher*, while *Norwoods Tryangles* stands side by side with *The Chirurgions Mate*. It is evidently the library of a self-taught man, prone to litigation, who finds no nut too hard to yield to his cracking. The above is a collection of books unequalled in the Providence of that day. The entire personal estate was appraised at £147. 12. 8. We may express its value in terms of "current country pay" by saying that it would purchase seventy-four head of cattle, or as many horses. The landed property estimated by the assessors' price-list for 1679 was worth from three to four pounds an acre.

Thomas Olney, Senior, whose daughter married Joseph Williams, died in 1682. His legacy to his son-in-law consisted of "all my part in the yoake of oxen which is now betweene us." The remaining cattle, together with his "moveable goods," were to be "Equally devided into 3 parts," of which "Liddea

Williams" was to receive one. The remaining cattle appear to be represented by "4 Cowes, in the deceased Tho: Olneys yard," valued at ten pounds. His house contained a parlor, kitchen, hall chamber, and "old bed room," but since the parlor furniture included, in addition to a varied assortment of bedroom and kitchen articles, "3 Cart boxes, 1 lince pinn and a washer," we may judge that it was so called by courtesy, rather than from usage. Since Olney followed the trade of a tanner, we are not surprised to find a large part of his "moveable" estate under the item "Dryhides in all the places where they lye." Among his household furniture were "2 old joynt Chaires, and a joynt stoole, 1 Greate Chaire, 1 smale Table," one pair of tongs, and one of "And Irons." His stock of glassware was not inconsiderable for that day. He had "1 quart Glasse bottle, a halfe pint Glasse bottle and a Cann," and "3 Square bottles." He also possessed an assortment of brass and iron kettles, brass candlesticks, pewter pots, platters, spoons, and cups, a goodly supply of bed linen, and a creditable number of "Table Cloaths" and napkins. Besides "one Bible," and "3 old peeces of Bibles," his library was comprised in "3 Bookes namely Ainsworths *Annotations*, A *Concordance*, & fishers *Ashford Dispute*." His entire estate amounted to £78. 9. 5. "If no mistake be in Casting up," wrote the cautious appraisers.

In the midst of the "terrible burning fits," which,

said Roger Williams, set Providence "all on fire . . . about our Lines," there befell the tragedy of King Philip's War. The scourge swept through the settlements of Massachusetts, Plymouth, and Connecticut, nor did Rhode Island escape. Comparatively few of her settlers lost their lives, but great damage was done to their farms and cattle. Warwick was burned, and a large part of Providence destroyed. Philip (or Metacomet) became sachem of the Wampanoags on the death of his brother, Alexander, in 1662. Whatever traditional ideas of revenge for his brother's death, or of driving the white man from his path, may ultimately have animated him, the first nine years of his ascendancy were chiefly remarkable for the rapidity with which he sold off the lands of his tribe to any town, or individual, able and willing to furnish coats, hoes, beads, jew's-harps, guns, ammunition, and rum, in return. In 1667, the war with Holland brought unusually large supplies of arms and ammunition into the country, of which the Indians doubtless obtained a fair proportion, and consequently "their activity and insolence is grown so high," says Roger Williams, writing to the Court of Magistrates at Boston, "that they daily consult, and hope, and threaten to render us slaves."

From the above date to 1675, when hostilities actually broke out, matters were in a state of slow fermentation. "Honest John Easton" succinctly describes the situation: "So the English were afraid and

Philip was afraid, and both increased in Arms." In the latter part of June, 1675, Philip and his braves burned a few houses at Swansea, in the Plymouth Colony, and then retreated northward before the English soldiery, to the town of Mendon. In September, Deerfield was destroyed, and a series of raids on the towns of the Connecticut Valley went on during the fall months. Early in the summer, efforts had been made by Massachusetts, through Roger Williams, to induce the Narragansets to sign a treaty which should deprive the Wampanoags of the support of that powerful tribe, now well provided with firearms, and numbering two thousand fighting men under the leadership of Canochet, the son of Roger Williams's old friend, Miantonomi.

Friendly protestations were readily obtained, and in profusion, but the summer was half over before anything in the way of a treaty was forthcoming. Such as it was, the document bore the signatures of men of small importance, whose act would have little weight with the warriors of the tribe. William Harris has given an account of the attitude of the Narragansets at this time. He says that Philip's men took refuge with the Narragansets, who "entered into articles to deliver phillips men . . . but did not"; that on the contrary, they "made large pretences of peace, intending nothing less; but they thought they should by a sudden war lose theyr harvest; that then it would soone disable them to con-

tinew the war." Once the harvest gathered, and laid away in the secret storehouses, underground, the Indians would have ample provision for the winter, and could be let loose over the country as soon as the snows should have disappeared.

At all events, this was the reasoning of the English colonists, and acting thereon, the combined forces of Plymouth, Connecticut, and Massachusetts, together with a few Rhode-Island men, rendezvoused at Tower Hill (in the present South Kingston) one bitterly cold December night. "It froze that night very hard," writes Harris. From Tower Hill the little army marched to surprise the ancient Narraganset stronghold, some three or four miles distant. This well-known monument of Indian engineering skill was situated in the middle of a large swamp, which was in itself the most formidable of the defences of the fort. The surface of the swamp was frozen hard by the severe frost, and the English found the fort in the centre far from unassailable. It was not captured, however, without considerable sharp fighting. Harris says: "The English shewed very much Valour; runing up to the mussells of the guns and to theyr porte holes; firing into theyr forte, leaping over theyr brestworkes, and into theyr fort, turning the but ends of theyr guns sometimes." A large number of Indians — perhaps one hundred and fifty — were killed in the fight, and probably three times as many were made prisoners. In the words of the estimable

Doctor Increase Mather, there were "two and seventy Indian Captains slain, all of them, and brought down to Hell in one day." Sixty-eight of the English were killed, and one hundred and fifty wounded.

Probably the effective force of the Narragansets was not seriously crippled. The moral effect was no doubt great, and the loss of their carefully stored provisions was a very grave misfortune. Many of the Indian granaries in the Narraganset country were, after the fight, discovered and destroyed, and their owners must have suffered much from lack of food. Nevertheless, their retaliatory measures made the following year a stirring time for their English neighbors. All pretence of adherence to treaty obligations vanished with the smoke of the ruined stronghold. Harris says that after this time "many mischeifs were done upon many townes of the massachusetts, to the los of many soules."

When the Narragansets, the traditional friends of the Providence Plantation, went on the war path, the colony of Rhode Island was obliged to face a peculiarly exposed position. Not only had the long and unbroken peace with the Indians precluded all necessity for that unsleeping watchfulness, ever on the lookout for an unexpected onslaught, which characterized the life of many New-England settlements; the very government of the colony of Rhode Island, with its command of resources and authority to act in emergencies, had recently passed into the



hands of men whose religious creed explicitly forbade them "to trayne, to learne to fight, to war, or to kill any person or persons." Only three years earlier the Quaker Assembly had put their principles on record in the above words. True, it was permitted to "all those who are perswaded in their understanding and conscience, that it is lawfull and noe sin against God, to kill," etc., to do the same, but drastic preparatory measures to ward off an Indian attack could hardly be expected from such a legislative body, the majority of whose propertied members were housed in comparative safety on the island of Aquidneck.

The question of defence was mooted as early as the fall preceding the Great Swamp Fight, near Tower Hill. "The dangerous hurries with the Indians," and the necessity for putting the colony "in a suitable posture of defence" were discussed, and the Assembly decided to "referr the consideration and conclusion of the matter unto the Councill of Warr in each Towne." Then came a lull, broken by the fight of December 19, with its disastrous consequences. In January, the Indians raided Pawtuxet, where they did much damage, burning corn and hay, and driving off sheep, cattle, and horses. In this raid the youngest son of William Harris — Toleration Harris — was killed. The father mourned him long and deeply. In his last will he left instructions that his farm should "be called Mourning, as a monument of the death of my deare son Tolleration Harris." In

his account of the war, already quoted, he says: "I have lost a deer son; a dilligent engenious Just man; temperate in all things, whom the Indians lay in wait for by the way syd and killed him, and a negro man, and burnt our houses, and drove away aboute 50 head of Cowkind cattell, and 4 score horsekinde of ours, and carryed away some goods, and burnt about 50 loads of hay."

Shortly after the Swamp Fight the troops of the united colonies were withdrawn from the Narraganset country, leaving a garrison of seventy men in a block-house of our old acquaintance, Richard Smith, the Indian trader. Their stay was of short duration. The Council at Boston decided on their withdrawal, and a letter written at Boston, in the following July, narrates that "the very next Day after their Departure, the Indians came and burnt the said Garrison-house (one of the most delightful Seats in New-England) and another House of the said Captain Smiths at Saugau [near Wickford, where Roger Williams often stayed] . . . and the Day following assulted Warwick with so unhappy a Successe that they burnt most of the Houses there." We can appreciate Richard Smith's reflections when he wrote: "We are nowe governed by Mens Wills and most of them Quakers, and of such and worse does Rhode Island consist."

The apprehensions of the Providence settlers had been aroused long before the "unhappy success"

just related. In the preceding October the Providence town-meeting was sufficiently alive to the uncertainties of the situation to order that a reconnoitring force of six men should be "sentt out of the town Every day to discover what Indeanes shal come to disquiat the towne." This action was almost simultaneous with the advice tendered by the General Assembly to the towns of the colony, namely, that they should protect themselves.

As we should expect, such evidence as exists respecting defensive operations on the part of Providence indicates that they were initiated by Roger Williams. Notwithstanding his age and failing health, he held the position of captain of the "Traine Band," and we may rest assured it was no sinecure. The following letter is undated, but we can hardly err in ascribing to it a date shortly following the raids in the Pawtuxet Valley. The letter runs: "I pray the town, in the sense of the late bloody practices of the natives, to give leave to so many as can agree with William Field, to bestow some charge upon fortifying his house, for the security of the women and children. Also to give me leave, to put up some defence on the hill, between the mill and the highway, for the like safety of the women and children in that part of the town." William Field's house stood on his home lot, a little south of the present Great Bridge. It was fortified, doubtless after a primitive sort of fashion, and served as a refuge for the handful of

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townsmen who eventually awaited the onslaught of the savages.

By March, an attack appeared so imminent, and the ability to resist it so insufficient, that those in authority, led by Cromwell's former man-at-arms, Arthur Fenner, addressed an indignant and stirring remonstrance to the colonial executive at Newport. The remonstrance is lost, but the answer thereto gives a sufficiently clear idea of the tone of its contents. "Captain Fenner with the Rest concerned," the reply begins, "I thought good to present you with my Informations of your evell Suggestions Concerning us in authority Especially myselfe (as if not worthy to live)"; and from this premise the writer goes on to set forth his view of the case. In the first place, had a relieving force been sent to Providence, the expenses of their armament and maintenance "would have Eaten you and us quite up"; secondly, the town of Providence had been especially exempted from the colony taxes, "partly for the Ende you might have Relief and to deale plainly with you, wee are not of ability to keepe Soldiers under paye, having not provisions, as bread (neither are you)." Under these circumstances the advice of the governor was to secure whatever was possible, "and what you Cannot Secure, is best to be transported hither for Security," he concludes.

This missive was written on March 28, and on the following day the Indians attacked Providence.

Twenty-nine houses were plundered and burned. The greater part of the town's population of, perhaps, five hundred had withdrawn to the island of Rhode Island, in accordance with the advice of the General Assembly, as being "the most secureist place." They were to be provided with farming land, so far as practicable, and with grazing rights for their cows, if they were so exceedingly fortunate as to have any. The inhabitants of Warwick moved *en masse*, a proceeding which ceases to appear extraordinary when we read that Warwick was "all of it burned by the enemy at several times." The historian who is responsible for this statement also informs us that "Pawtuxet had twelve houses burned in March 1676," and Providence had "eighteen houses burned in June 1675." These last were outlying farmhouses, situated very much as was that of Arthur Fenner, which made one of the eighteen mentioned.

Twenty-seven of the men of Providence, including Roger Williams, "staid and went not away." Backus, in his *History of the Baptists*, gives the following account of the approach of the Indians. "Tradition says, that when the Indians appeared on the highlands north of their great cove, Mr. Williams took his staff and walked over towards them, hoping likely to pacify them as he had often done; but when some of their aged men saw him, they came out and met him, and told him that though those who had long known him would not hurt him, yet their young

men were so enraged that it was not safe for him to venture among them; upon which he returned to the garrison." A few weeks later he wrote to the Governor of Massachusetts; "their Houses here, their Forts, their Fences [are] burnt up, and much if not most of their Cattel destroyed."

Probably the damage which is most deeply felt by posterity is that sustained by the town records. Tradition tells us that they were actually in flames, and were only saved from destruction by being thrown into the mill-pond. The tale is accredited by ample evidence, and the fact accounts for much of the astonishingly incoherent state in which they are preserved. Such parts of the records as were entirely lost were supplied, so far as might be, from memory. If the exact date of an event was uncertain, an approximate date was filled in, as the best substitute available. The town-records were, at the best, kept very much as the individual idiosyncracies of the acting town-clerk might dictate. Town-meetings were entered at one end of a book, and deeds of land conveyances at the other. Sometimes both sides of a page were used, frequently they were not. In the latter case, the two subjects slid by one another, — so to speak, — and as a result of this novel system of double-entry we may read on page 105 (numbering from the beginning of the volume) the first part of the record of certain transactions in land, which are finished on page 11 because the reverse side of the

“MARK” OF KING PHILIP

Affixed to a deed of 1659. From original in Rhode  
Island Historical Society.





have, or at any time hereafter we or any of us, or the heirs of any of us, may  
have or claim, or be in to the within bargains, premises. To have and to  
hold the same, with theirs and every of their appurtenances unto the said  
Thomas Gorman his heirs and assigns, to the only people of and boroughs  
of the said Thomas Gorman his heirs and assigns for ever, and we the  
said King Philip Joseph make our common do to them as we do in writing  
under Baller by the name of Jeffrey, in convening all and singular the within  
named & written premises with the appurtenances to the appurtenances of  
his heirs and assigns against us and every one of us, and for the heirs of us  
and every one of us, shall for ever hereafter, wax rent and defend  
the said premises for ever. And we have here unto put our having  
the thirteenth day of May in the year of our Lords one thousand six  
hundred and fifty and nine.

Sighmond Galah and friends

am the we fear of

Samuel Gordon Junior

Grumley B.L. 1502

King Philip P March

It is shown that the said Sighmond Galah and friends  
are the we fear of  
Samuel Gordon Junior  
Grumley B.L. 1502



pages is numbered from the end of the book. Page 17 is devoted to the sales and transfers of 1648, while page 18 deals with those of ten years later. It is not surprising that in 1655 the town voted to have "the Progresse of the Lawes in use that formerly were in a Loose Paper . . . written in the Booke." Part of the disorder above described has arisen from careless rebinding, further confounding what was already confused.

One more quotation from William Harris may serve to close the episode of King Philip's War. He writes: "Just now news is brought that this 12th of August early in the morneing phillip was Slayne in a swamp within a mile of mount hope and about a mile and a half from Rhode Island." His cause was already lost, and his fate was enviable compared with that of his companions in arms and their families. These poor wretches were sold into servitude among the colonists for terms of years, varying with the age of the prisoner. The prisoners of war were at first a source of embarrassment, rather than wealth, to the good people of Providence, where adequate facilities for disposing of an assemblage of presumably hostile Indians were sadly lacking. Hence the record of August 29, "By God's Providence it seasonably came to passe that Providence Williams brought up his mother from Newport, in his sloop and cleared the Towne by his vessel of all the Indians to the great peace and Content of all the Inhabitants."

The Quaker government at Newport underwent considerable modification during the progress of the war. As Backus says, "finding their spiritual power would not secure them against the Indians, they gave out military commissions." On the well-known principle of locking the stable door after the horse is stolen, John Cranston was appointed colony-major, on April 11, 1676. In May, Cranston became deputy-governor of the colony, and under his leadership really effective measures were taken for the security of the mainland. A garrison, "consistinge of seven men with a commander, which shall make up eight" was "settled" at Providence, to be "the King's garrison," with Arthur Fenner as "chiefe Commander, not eclipsinge Captain Williams power in the exercise of the Traine Band there." And moreover "one great gun" was ordered "to be sent to Providence, for the garrison," with fifty pounds of powder and one hundredweight of lead; "which said powder and lead is not to be embezzled, but kept for a reserve against a time of need, to repulse the enemy." This garrison was to be paid by the colony, hence the less need for the "embezzlement" of powder and lead. The men remained under arms until October, when they were withdrawn, for after the death of Philip the stamping-out of the smouldering embers of insurrection was a matter of but few weeks.

Although Philip was not an especially attractive personage on the stage of history he has figured

rather prominently as a hero in fiction. Several dramas have been devoted to the tale of his varying fortunes and tragic end. One of these was written for an actor of no less note than Edwin Forrest, and a burlesque of this play was at one time a favorite on the Boston stage.

Canonchet, the youthful sachem of the Narraganset Indians, who was captured and shot in the April of 1676, has been portrayed by that master-painter of pioneer woodcraft and seacraft, J. Fenimore Cooper, in his novel *The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish*.



## Chapter IV

### THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

**F**ROM the beginning, the social and political life of Providence was modified by conditions peculiar, among English-speaking settlements, to this colony alone. The "first-comers" brought to their self-appointed task of "planting" on the banks of the Moshassuc an unbounded supply of religious zeal, together with an extremely limited supply of this world's goods.

The pioneer community was made up of men who appeared on the scene almost at haphazard, the great majority of whom were restive of all control, and insubordinate on the slightest provocation. Those who could not live in peace with their neighbors elsewhere, came to Providence, where they speedily claimed the privilege of "declaring their minds" concerning their temporal condition and environment, as well as concerning "a state of eternal salvation."

The situation of Providence was admirably adapted for a great commercial centre, but man does not live by geography alone, and there was for many a long year an absolute dearth of articles of export.

The light and sandy soil barely yielded sufficient crops for the farmers and their families. The country

was wooded, but no one had capital to invest in the lumber trade. In the eyes of their Connecticut and Massachusetts neighbors, the men of Providence were outcasts, who had no claim to help from their self-righteous countrymen, even in the way of trade. They were pitch, and to touch was to be defiled.

Accordingly our colonists turned, perforce, to the more worldly Dutchmen of the "Manhattoes." These shrewd traders were soon blithely trudging over the Pequod Path, bringing hoes, guns, and powder, together with coats, beads, and looking-glasses for the Indian trade. Presently Dutch sloops crept through the Sound and up Narragansett Bay, to land cargoes of rum, wine, sack, and spirits, in quantities far beyond the needs of the colonists, and sufficient to supply the demands of the entire tribe of the Narragansets. The liquor excise soon became a profitable source of revenue. There was no wealth, and but little education among the first settlers. Their religious enthusiasm was controversial rather than altruistic. With very little church organization there was a great deal of doctrinal exposition. Religious creeds were so numerous and so varied that Cotton Mather asserted that if ever a man had mislaid his religion, he could be sure of finding it somewhere in Rhode Island. The "soul liberty" of the Providence Plantation doubtless worked for good, but it most certainly did not work for unity. In 1651, William Arnold, of Pawtuxet, put his views on record

to the effect, that "under pretence of liberty of conscience about these parts, there comes to live all the scum, the runaways of the country, which, in time, for want of a better order, may bring a heavy burthen upon the land."

Such cohesion as existed in this concourse of "loving friends and neighbors" was that of a common economic interest. Each townsman was, by virtue of being such, a landed proprietor, — a privilege dear to the heart of every Englishman, and doubly dear in this instance, since land was the only form of wealth attainable. A scholar of keen insight has said that in no settlement on the continent of America did land play so important a part as in Providence. This state of things arose from the fact that their lands represented for the settlers of Providence their one common interest. The church, which was the social and political centre of the normal Anglo-Saxon settlement of the seventeenth century, was in Providence a dividing — not a connecting — influence. Of course the money value of land in the colony was at first very small; it was pitifully small, when we consider the "disputations" and "agitations" which its division engendered and fostered. In 1650 it was decreed that "all men received" into the town should pay one shilling per acre for their home share of land, and sixpence per acre for the remainder of their grant, which should not exceed twenty-five acres.



The source from which the townspeople hoped to realize their dreams of future wealth was the undivided lands. When, in 1658, Massachusetts abandoned her claim to exercise jurisdiction over the Pawtuxet lands, the proprietors of Providence began to bestir themselves. The most fertile lands of their plantation were thereby restored to them, as if by a miracle, from out the very hand of the acquisitive Bay Colony. They at once obtained permission from the General Assembly to purchase more land from the Indians ("seeing they are straitened"), and to clear off the Indians from the land already purchased. The consummation of this Pawtuxet purchase was quickly followed by the laying-down of the Twenty-Mile Line "up into the Countrey," to the west of "Foxes Hill." Then arose anxious inquiries as to the number of purchasers, or proprietors, who might safely be permitted to share in the real estate of the plantation, "allowing a sufficient quantity of commoning." After three years more of the "headiness, tumults and disorders" against which Sir Henry Vane had warned the colony, with that frankness universally recognized as the touchstone of true friendship, the existing proprietors carried their point. It was voted that "there shall not be any more people accommodated with land as Purchasers within the bounds of this towne; and that this order be not repealed without the full consent of the whole number of the Purchasers."

In other words, the proprietors, one hundred and one in number, proposed to keep the entire undivided land of the township in their own possession, with the exception of such portions as had already been declared common; and not without the unanimous consent of their little oligarchy could the landless man be admitted within their charmed circle. A proprietor might sell his right, or any part of it. For example, he might sell his house lot, or his six-acre lot, or any portion of the land which he held by virtue of his right, and such sales were matters of everyday occurrence. After 1663, however, the number of purchasers' rights actually in existence could not be added to without the expressed consent of every member of the corporation. And surely he must be an individual of sanguine temperament and hopeful disposition who should cherish any pronounced expectation of inducing one hundred and one vigorous and self-respecting Rhode-Islanders to hold identical views on any subject—even were no question of property rights involved.

The freemen of the town, in their turn, held jealously to their privileges, refusing to allow a newcomer to reside within their boundaries unless he was first approved by the vote of a town-meeting. He must have recourse to that same august assembly for permission to buy that land which would alone entitle him to the rights and obligations of a citizen in good and regular standing. At a very early date in

the history of the plantation it became necessary for the "distressed of conscience" to satisfy the good people of Providence that he was able and willing to provide for his own maintenance before he was permitted to taste of the "sweet cup of liberty" in their fellowship. He might safely be trusted to work out his own salvation, but he must furnish a practical guaranty of his ability to provide bed and board for himself and family.

Land was the only form of invested wealth available; hence, the newcomer must purchase land, having first obtained from the town-meeting permission to do so. Nor was the limitation felt as a hardship until the eighteenth century was drawing to its close. Land was the great desideratum, it is true, but land was abundant, and so cheap as to be within easy reach of every able-bodied and industrious pioneer. Meadow-land must have been in great demand, since by far the chief source of the wealth of the townsmen lay in their herds of swine and goats. As early as 1648, the town records make mention of "14 head of Cattle," which would seem to imply cows or oxen rather than goats or swine; and there is evidence that "cowkind" appeared on the scene at an even earlier date. In 1650 a "pound" is designated as the appropriate place for such "Cattle" as a man might find "in his own Corne." The town pound was on the highway described as being just north of "the house and house lot" of Robert Coles,

that is, on the present Meeting Street, which thus entered on its career as the abiding-place of various forms of incarceration. At a later day in the colony's history a jail succeeded the pound, and a school-house has long since succeeded the jail.

A rather curious episode, which took place in Warwick in 1651, throws light on several aspects of colonial life. We are shown the wayfaring Dutch trader, the hospitality of the English farmer, and the apparently limitless field of action of the town-meeting. John Warner, formerly "a citizen and freeman of London," was one of the ten men who purchased Warwick, where he settled as a farmer, — probably not far from that well-known thoroughfare, the Pequot Path. In 1651 he had occasion to bring in a bill to some Dutch traders who had made his house their headquarters for some two months of the winter. He had stored their goods, provided good fires so that "16 (horse cart) Load of wood . . . was burned spedely," and "diet as good as the time of the yeere offored," — namely, pork, bacon, roots, butter, and cheese, while "every roome in the house upon ocations was at there servise." For these accommodations he charged them thirteenpence apiece, per day. As thus stated the price seems far from excessive, yet the Dutchmen protested loudly, and worthy Mr. Warner found himself obliged to appeal to the town for help to collect the debt.

No doubt much might be said on both sides, and

when we recall the fact that home shares were valued at twelvence per acre, and other land at sixpence, we shall perhaps appreciate better the debtor's point of view. Seven years later, the town paid Roger Mowry, who kept "the ordinary," one and sixpence "for this daies firing and house roome." There is no evidence of any especial rise in prices since 1651, and we are, on the whole, inclined to regret that John Warner did not succeed in making good his claim, and pocketing his thirteen pence per day. So far was this from being the outcome of the affair that the unfortunate Warner only succeeded in arousing the enmity of practically the entire town of Warwick. His case must have been prosecuted with vigor, rather than discretion, for when it was duly brought up in the town-meeting he was there charged with three heinous offences against law and order: (1) with calling the officers in the town rogues and thieves with respect to their office, (2) with calling the whole town of Warwick rogues and thieves, (3) with threatening the lives of men, etc. For these misdemeanors he was forbidden to vote, and declared ineligible for any office until he had given the town satisfaction.

This ultimatum was pronounced in April, and in May the irate Warner shook the dust of the town from his shoes and returned to England with his family. He had married the daughter of Ezekiel Holliman, of Providence, the same who baptized

Roger Williams at the time of the formation of the Baptist church. Holliman wished to make his grandson, John Warner, his heir, and at his request the boy came back to the colony, where, in 1670, he married Ann Gorton, the daughter of the eloquent and turbulent author of *Simplicite's Defence*. It is not perhaps an occasion for unqualified astonishment when we discover that John and Ann Warner failed to adjust amicably all their differences of opinion. If John inherited his father's pugnacity, and Ann her father's talent for rhetorical vituperation, imagination can without difficulty supply an explanation for the appearance of Ann Warner before the General Assembly of 1683, to ask for a divorce. The court declared a separation, and that John Warner should "put over" part of his estate for the maintenance of his wife and children. Notwithstanding this stormy episode in his career, John Warner appears to have been a respected citizen of his native town, where he spent a long and useful life.

By 1675, when the Indian war broke out, there were probably some twenty or twenty-five houses standing on the Towne Street of Providence. The greater part of these were at the north end where the grist-mill and saw-mill were situated. A little distance to the north of these centres of the town's industrial activity was the "ordinary," or tavern, of Roger Mowry, where town-meetings were often held, and where the Indian prisoner who was sus-

pected of murdering John Clawson was so vigilantly guarded.

As early as 1654, the General Assembly, moved probably by the wish to place liquor-selling under some sort of restraint, desired each town to "forthwith apoynt or licence one or two howses for the entertainment of strangers," and "to encourage" such enterprising persons as were inclined to take advantage of this opportunity to engage in the hotel business; "all others" were forbidden to retail "either wine, beer, or strong liquors," under a penalty of five pounds fine. The extreme severity of the penalty may well lead us to wonder whether its exaction was ever seriously contemplated. At all events, accommodation for the public seemed to lag behind the needs of this stirring age, for in the following year the Assembly again took up the matter, and announced that "this Court shall nominate and apoynt two persons to keepe such houses . . . in each town," and forthwith promptly nominated for Providence Roger Mowry and Richard Pray. In order that strangers — red or white — might not unwittingly purchase refreshment from those unauthorized to provide the same, the Assembly further ordered "that each one so apoynted as premised . . . shall cause to be sett out a convenient signe at the most perspicuous place of the saide house," and this was to be done "with all convenient speede."

Roger Mowry came to Providence from Salem,

probably shortly before 1650. His "howse of entertainment," and others similarly equipped for business, must have fulfilled the purpose for which they were "apoynted" not wisely, but too well. For in 1656 the Assembly once more felt called upon to interpose by an enactment "that no howse of entertainment shall suffer any person to tipples after 9 of the clock at night, except they can give a satisfactory reason to the Constable or magistrate"; furthermore, the constable was to proceed on the spot, and without process of law, to collect a fine of five shillings from the "ordinarie keeper," and two and sixpence from "the partie" concerned. We are tempted to enter the field of conjecture in quest of a possible "satisfactory reason" with which to appease the worthy constable. With liquor selling at two and sixpence the pint, it is evident that the officer's opportunities for "entertainment" presented large possibilities in any town at all given to protracted conviviality.

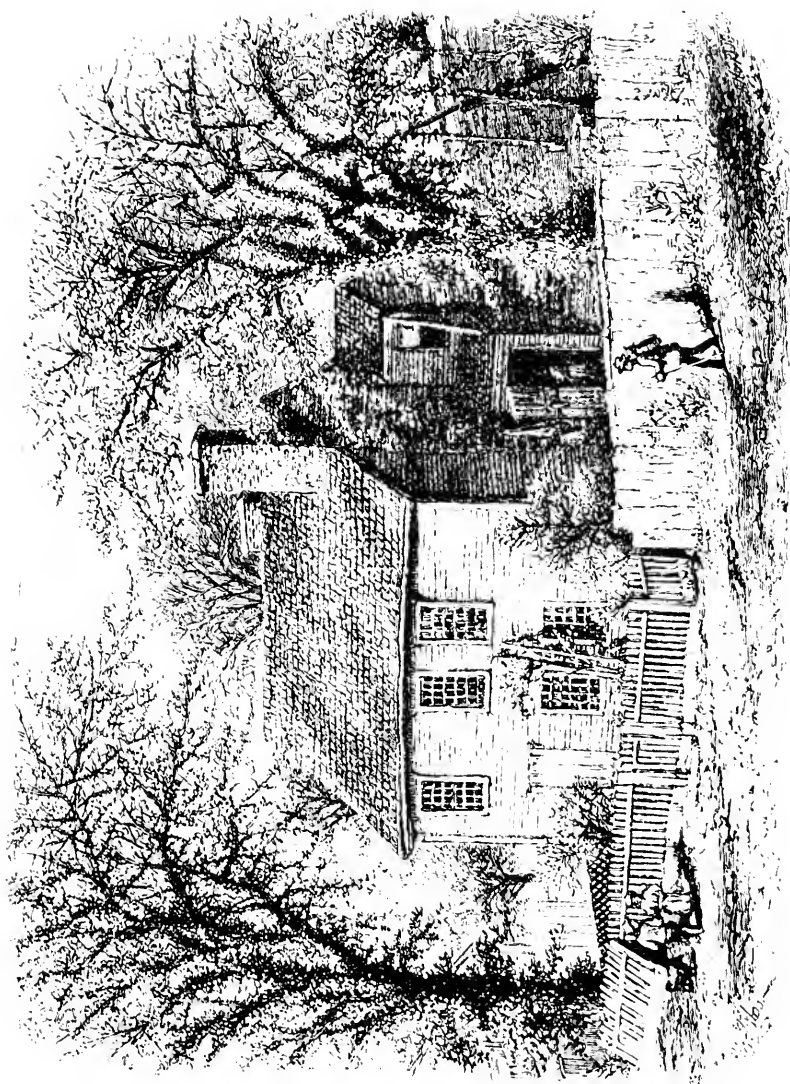
After these attractive suggestions of evening gossip, spiced with the "ordinarie keeper's" favorite brew, it is somewhat disconcerting to realize that the "ordinary" of Roger Mowry, where town-meetings were convened, travellers entertained, and the Indian prisoner Waumanitt given "howse room" for himself and his guard during some eight or ten nights, would impress us as a far from commodious abiding-place. Five years ago the house itself was still standing, and in a state of very good preservation. It was built



THE ROGER MOWRY TAVERN

Later the Whipple House, on Abbott Street, torn down  
in 1900. From a wood-cut made about 1860.







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certainly as early as 1653, and originally contained two rooms. The lower, or "fire room," was entered from the street, and had a huge stone chimney, which entirely filled one end of the house, save for a space of some six feet at the side, where a steep staircase led to the "chamber" above. The dimensions of the "fire room" were sixteen by seventeen feet. The door, with its large step of a single flat stone, was in the southwest corner. The house was a story and a half in height, so that the overhead chamber was no more than a loft. It would be interesting to know where the host bestowed "the bed . . . and victuals for the entertayning of strangers," which were, in 1661, added to the list of essentials demanded of those who would "retayle wine or lyckers."

If we were to form our opinion of the amount of "lyckers" required to quench the thirst of the town of Providence from the supplies brought there, or such part of them as are entered on the town records for the greater convenience of the excise-collector, we should stand aghast at the apparent capacity of the consumers. In 1655, forty-one ankers (each containing nine or ten gallons) are recorded. Of these, Roger Mowry is credited with six. In 1656, we find a total importation of sixty-five ankers, three hogsheads, and one pipe. In 1658, eighty-six ankers, eight quarter-casks, sixty-nine gallons, and four barrels were brought into the town; and in the following year, one hundred and forty-nine ankers, four

hogsheads, one pipe, three barrels, and one half a cask. The contents of these various receptacles are enumerated as "liquors," wine, rum, "strong liquors," and sack. Brandy is specified but twice.

Of course the greater part of this deluge of "strong waters" was destined for the Indian trade, and, too, the trade itself had just received an impetus from the close of the war with the Dutch, thus removing a barrier which must have cut off supplies, to a greater or less degree, during the years immediately preceding the dates given above. "The bloody liquor trade," as Roger Williams justly styled the traffic, was far too profitable not to thrive in the face of fixed prices, excises, and restrictions on selling at retail. In the account just given, the home manufacture has been entirely neglected. Cider was plentiful. "Peach bear" cannot have been a rarity, since as early as 1656 Roger Williams has occasion to speak of its ill effects as a vehicle for neighborly hospitality. "Thos: the Scot . . . hath bene taken up, drowned in going over in his Canow," he writes, "having drunk too much Peach bear at his neighbors."

The houses of this early period can only have been of the most primitive type, of which Roger Mowry's is a good example. They were made of half-logs, and consisted of one room with a large stone chimney at the end. Probably the roof was of thatch, and the logs of the framework were no doubt plastered with

mud.. At one corner, by the fireplace, a stair, steep enough to have been built on the rungs of the original ladder, led to the half-story loft under the roof. The first amplification of this simple structure was the addition of a lean-to, built along one side of the main house.

An interesting house of this early period was that of our military friend, Captain Arthur Fenner, in the present suburb of Cranston. It was not pulled down until 1895, and from the description it seems that it was probably a reconstruction in part of that destroyed by the Indians in 1675. The original chimney was used, with an addition, for the second building. Across the top of the old fireplace lay an oak beam with a carved moulding along its lower edge. The ornamental side of life was so very far beyond the reach, and possibly the aspirations, of the greater number of Fenner's fellow-townsmen that this fragmentary relic of its non-utilitarian aspect rests in an almost pathetic isolation. We know that the meadow and upland of this "farm in the woods" were bought by Captain Fenner in 1654, and it is probable that the first house was built shortly afterwards. It was of the regulation story and a half type, with a lean-to at the side. It was thirty-six feet in length, sixteen feet wide, and measured about nine feet from the door-sill to the top of the side posts. These ran to the roof, which sloped to within three feet of the floor of the upper chamber.

Captain Fenner was an able man, of well-known industry and thrift. His losses in the Indian war were considerable. Not only was his house burned, but his crops were destroyed, and his cattle driven off. What the Indians failed to discover, or had not time to reduce to ashes, fell a prey to the needs of the troops of the United Colonies, — of which Rhode Island was not one. "His Stacks of hay (22) and his fencing, &c., God Suffered not the Pagans to destroy," says Roger Williams. But the colonial troops "found it necessary to fodder their Horses and make them selves Lodging with the 22 Stacks and to make them selves fires with all his fencing and with whatever was, about the farm, Combustible." The necessity of paying for what was thus freely taken did not strike them as equally pressing.

It was a sorry spectacle which the Captain found awaiting him when he again entered into possession. Nevertheless, he at once rebuilt his house, and bent his energies to the work of restoration with such creditable results that, in ten years' time, he was able to report to the town assessors a rateable estate consisting of "about three Hundred Acres of Wood land unfenced & unimproved, about twenty Acres of Inclosed wild pasture, & about tenn Acres inclosed of English pasture, orchard & 3 shares of meadow, sum of it very boggy, scarce worth mowing; about five Acres of planting land; 2 oxen, 9 Cowes, 5 yeare old Cattle, 6 2 yeare old Catel, & 5 3 yeare



old Cattell, 4 Mares, one of them is but a yeareling mare, one Horse, 3 swine, tenn sheepe. this is a Just account. I pray be not unmindfull of the Golden Rule." It would be interesting to know if the assessors were men to meet halfway this suggestion as to putting precept into practice.

Less than a mile to the southwest of the Captain's house was that of his son, Thomas Fenner. Its huge stone chimney, which fills the greater part of its north end, bears the date 1677. We may assume that after the war the Captain rebuilt his own house and "set up" his son's at very nearly the same time. The Thomas Fenner house was truly spacious, with its "fire room" seventeen feet square, and stone fireplace wherein many a ten-foot log has blazed and crackled. In the corner by the chimney there was room not only for the staircase, but for the trapdoor leading down to the cellar. This mansion could boast two stories and an attic, all provided with leaded windows of a single sash.

A vivid picture of the domestic life and surroundings of the farmer and his family at the close of the seventeenth century is obtained from the inventory of his personal effects. It includes his wardrobe, furniture, and the various accessories of his vocation, set forth with such minute detail that there were no sins of omission to be charged to the account of the appraisers. When Captain Arthur Fenner died, in 1703, his personal property was appraised at

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£166.08.0, including "some horses and Mares not yet found," whose place in the valuation list is formally filled in with ciphers. "One horse neere or about thirty yeares old," is put down at one shilling. Lest a wrong impression of Fenner's thrift should be given, it must be said that the livestock which was found made, on the whole, a very creditable showing. He had a yoke of oxen, five cows, four heifers, six steers, "2 yearlings," a bull, and a horse, — the last valued at £4. 5. 0. There was a plentiful supply of farming-tools, and various sorts of provender, for both man and beast. "Sidar," "Peach Jyce," a hive of bees, Indian corn, wheat, rye, oats, cheese, butter, meal, pork, and "beere," are enumerated, as also twenty-nine loads of hay, worth twenty pounds.

The supply of furniture was more ample than were the accommodations for housing it. Imagination fails us in the endeavor to plan for the storage, in a house consisting of one room and a loft, of three bedsteads and the usual accompaniment of beds and bedding, "three Great Chaires, & seven small ones," "five Chests and three boxes and a Trunck," besides kettles, pots, "a Frieing Pann and a dripping Pann," platters, porringers, cups, "sausers," and bottles; — not to mention "A great Bible, a Booke called the statute" and "seven small Bookes." The Captain's "weareing Clothes" were valued at £8. 6. 0. The wardrobe is carefully itemized. It consisted of "2 hatts, one Neckcloth, one silke Capp, 3 shirts,

3 pair of silver Buttons, 5 wastcotts, seven pair of breeches and a pair of drawers, 3 loose Coates, one Buff belt, 2 pair of Mittens, one pair of Gloves, 3 pair of stockings, one pair of Bootes and spurrs, and some shooes." The Captain's silver buttons are among the first items of silver in any form which figure in the lists of household effects in the Providence Plantations.

In his entertaining book on *The Colonial Tavern*, Mr. Field tells us that Major Thomas Fenner, whose house has just been described, brewed a beer famous throughout the countryside, which commanded a price of no less than three shillings a barrel; and who can doubt that it was made from the same recipe as were the "5 Barrills" included among his father's effects? At all events, Mr. Field has given us the recipe, and any one who doubts the tonic effects of the resulting beverage has at his command the means whereby he may taste and see that the beer is good.

*Receipt to make Bear*

One ounce of Sentry Suckery or Sulindine one handful Red Sage or Large  $\frac{1}{4}$  Pound Shells of Iron Brused fine take 10 quarts of Water Steep it away to Seven and a quart of Molases Wheat Brand Baked Hard. one quart of Malt one handful Sweet Balm Take it as Soone as it is worked.

King Philip's War destroyed the work of a generation. Few lives were lost, it is true, but large numbers of cows, horses, and sheep were driven off; crops,

haystacks, and houses were burned. In the town of Providence many of those houses which had been destroyed were not rebuilt. Some of the people who had left the town when it was threatened by the Indians did not return. A series of readjustments took place, — either knowingly or unwittingly.

The disturbance caused by the impending trouble, even before the blow actually fell, is shown by the action of the town regarding the bridge at Weybosset,—i.e., at Weybosset Point, the site where now stand the Washington Buildings, at the corner of Washington Row and Westminster Street. As late as 1660 (only fifteen years before the war) the town had gone to great expense in building a bridge. This structure had cost no less than one hundred and sixty pounds, and although, with characteristic New-England reserve, its exact location is withheld, the interesting fact is mentioned that it is useful, not only for the denizens of Providence, “but for the whole Countrey.” On the ground of the extraordinary cost of the bridge and its utility to the general public, it has been plausibly argued that the aforesaid bridge was at Weybosset, which is to say that it was the first Great Bridge over the river where Market Square is to-day.

Three years later a statement was made, which would seem to solve any doubts entertained by the most critical descendant of the seventeenth-century taxpayers. In April, 1663, “George Shepard of the

Towne of Providence . . . came . . . into Court," and presented to the town his rights as a purchaser in the lands lying between the Seven-Mile Line and the Twenty-Mile Line, "to this purpose, that the said Right shall be for the maintaining of the Towne Bridge at Waybossett." However generous the purpose of the donor, it soon became evident that the revenue from this real estate would not suffice to maintain the "Bridge at Waybossett," and in the following year a committee was appointed to "goe unto all the inhabetantes of the Towne to see what they will Contribute to the Mending the Bridge att Wayboysett." The amount of the contribution is not mentioned, but there is no doubt that it answered the purpose, since, by the terms of the agreement subsequently made with the town, it is specified that the contracting parties shall receive "for theire paines & Labour about the premises," £14. 10. 0, and that the same shall be paid in wheat at five shillings a bushel, and "Indian Corne" at three shillings a bushel; "and what peage is paid it is to be at sixteen per penney white and eight a penney Black."

Two years passed before action was again called for. In 1667 we read that five men were "Chosen to vew the bridge at Wapwoysit & to Considder of the most Easy & facill way to repaire it so that the passage may not be lost." The committee was made up of Roger Williams, John Throckmorton, Arthur Fenner, John Whipple, Senior, and Resolved Water-

man, and after a year had been taken "to Consider" the matter, Roger Williams characteristically came to the front with this proposition, — "to offer, that if you please, I will (with Gods helpe) take this Bridge into my Care, and by that moderate toll of Strangers of all Sorts . . . will maintaine it So long as it pleaseth God that I live in this Towne." His offer proceeded to state that the town was to be "free from all Toll," on condition that each family would give one man's work for one day in the year towards keeping the bridge in good condition. People owning teams, who used the bridge frequently, were to give a day's work of a man and team; those who had "lesse use, half a day." The town agreed to exact toll from strangers with cheerful promptness, but stated, somewhat ambiguously, in respect to the responsibility of the "Inhabetants," to coöperate in the matter, that "he shall Receave what Each person is freely willing to Contribute towards Saporting of the above said bridge."

Whether Roger amassed sufficient wealth from the tolls to excite the cupidity of the townsmen, or whether (as seems more probable) he was uncomfortably insistent in the matter of levying the required day's work from his neighbors and their teams, we cannot say. Certain it is, however, that in March, 1672, the town voted that he should not "any Longer Keepe at the Bridge," but was "wholely Forbid so to do."

In this condition of affairs, "the bridg at waybossett" speedily became nobody's business, and in the spring of 1675, when the "hurries with the Indians" was the thought uppermost in the minds of men, George Shepard's donation of land was formally returned to him by the town, for the stated reason that it was given "upon Conditiones that a bridg was maintain'd at waybossett which is not done." Possibly it was thought undesirable to provide a thoroughfare for the dreaded Indians, who were already raiding the surrounding country. In all probability the resources and energy of the frightened and anxious "Inhabetants" were taxed to the utmost in the effort to provide a refuge for their families and their chattels.

It was many a long day before a second bridge was built. With characteristic wrong-headedness, for the ensuing thirty years the townspeople, their cattle, and their teams splashed through the ford at "the wading-place" (from Steeple Street diagonally to the present Exchange Street), or went up the river half a mile to the Mill Bridge, in order to reach the meadows on Weybosset Plain, or the cart-path which led to the farms at Mashapaug.

The possession of teams would, under ordinary conditions, create a demand for good roads, and whatever shortcomings may be laid to the score of the Providence town-meeting, it cannot be accused of remissness in this matter. From 1649 it is repeatedly

“ordered,” or “voated,” that the highway shall be repaired by each man “before his house lot or lots,” that lands laid out shall not “damnify the highway,” that trees felled across the highway must be removed within twenty-four hours, and that the common road must not be obstructed by large stones, or boulders. At length, in 1664, every man who had a team was required to “worke 1 day worke a yeare with it at the high wayes,” and “Every howse keeper that hath no teame shall worke 2 dayes.”

This moderate requirement proved insufficient to meet the emergency, and the spring mud of the April following brought the town fathers to a realizing sense of the necessity for more drastic measures. Each “howse keeper” was thereupon required to “worke Three dayes in a yeare at the high wayes” under penalty of a fine of two shillings and sixpence for each day omitted. “And those who have oxen to forfeitt 1s. 6d. for a yoake,” unless “they Cann Excuse them selves justly Either by sicknesse or there oxen Cannot be found.”

Under these circumstances we should be inclined to predict an epidemic among the “howse keepers” for the spring of 1666, or else an astonishingly large number of lost and strayed oxen. Not improbably the town was visited by both misfortunes, with the result that the June town-meeting took up the matter, and ordered that “if any make such Excuses [as the above] yett they shall not be Freed.” A later gener-



ation supplemented the pound of cure with an ounce of prevention. In 1682, the General Assembly of the colony was moved to consider the "damage" done "in the towne of Providence by persons riding a gallup," and this devastating rate of progress was peremptorily forbidden "in the street lying against the great river . . . between the land of Pardon Tillinghast, and the northerly corner of John Whipple, Sen'r, where his dwelling-house stands," under penalty of five shillings fine. Pardon Tillinghast lived at the corner of South Main and Transit Streets, and John Whipple, Senior, dwelt about half-way up Constitution Hill, at the north end of the town.

By the time the good people of Providence had sold off their Indian prisoners, reinstated their household gods so far as that was practicable, and settled down once more to a quiet life on the Towne Street, diversified rather than disturbed by sundry neighborly differences of opinion, their first thought was for the preservation of their "Towne Books and Records (saved by Gods mercifull Providence from fire and water)." Accordingly four men, who had held the position of town-clerk, were appointed to "view and search the papers, what is wanting or Lost, and make report to the Towne." This was done in October, 1677, and the records were in due course delivered to the then town-clerk, Daniel Abbott.

Abbott's house, and, later, his still-house, stood

on the Towne Street, close by the present Market Square, and near the "great tree by the water side, before Thomas Fields," where the town-meetings were held during the months immediately following the Indian raid. When cold weather set in, the tree and the waterside must have furnished chilly accommodation, and no doubt Daniel Abbott, being town-clerk, was called on to provide house-room for the town-meeting, as well as the town records. Finally, he seems to have felt that the demands of hospitality had been amply fulfilled. In the December of 1679 he addressed the town, — "to pray the towne now without much further delay (before the boardes & Timber be most all sent out of the Townshipp) . . . to the Perticular propriety and advantages of only some few Perticular persons of the towne; that they agree Lovingly together for the building them a Towne house to keepe their meetings at; And not yet to Continue further Troubles and burdens on some Perticular persons, without tendering any Satisfaction for the privelledge thereof, as hath appeared neere this two yeares space of time, unto your Neighbour and Friend . . . Daniell Abbott."

This appeal to justice was not without effect. Once more Roger Williams came to the front, and a month later presented to the town-meeting a bill providing for arrears of payment due the town officials, with the result that Daniel Abbott was voted "the full and Just Sume of forty shillings in Currant pay," and

that on making known the amount of his claims for "howse rent yet unpaid," he should be "herd, Satisfied, Contented & payd."

So far, matters looked promising, but governments are notoriously ungrateful, and this deplorable fact is again brought out in the experience of the Providence town-clerk. Precisely six years later he pertinently informs the town-meeting that "as it is Equitable" for him to pay his debts, "it is as good reason for you to pay your debts," and with this preamble presents his bill of £1. 4. 6 for services in "Coppieing out" and "leivying" various town rates, concluding with the following exhortation: "And as the saying is, many can help one, better than one can help many: there were three yeares that meettings were kept at my dwelling, what will you allow me for that? Forty shillings was promised, but none performed. Considering the most was kept in the winter when fire-wood burn't out apace, which is scace to be had where I dwell."

This pungent reminder appears to have brought about a settlement of the debt. When Daniel Abbott next comes upon the stage of the town-meeting it is as the author of an ingenuously worded return of his taxable estate. He reports "a yoak of oxen, 2 Cows, 2 steers, One horse, and a poore (maim'd) young maire. Aboute 12 Acars of improveable Land, a 3rd part of a share of meddow, most of it but pollopodum stuffe, And for the Orchard . . . in 3 years all that I

give account of, was but 12 Bushels and a peck of Apples . . . as for my Orchard at home, it is Soe demolished trees ded and cutt down and That I had very Little Benefitt of Late yeares: Also I am prety much downe the winde at present. And have been disabled this Winter . . . and yet am Lame in 1 of my hands: and Like to be." If to this lugubrious tale there could have been added the complaint of a debt owing him from the town, we can hardly doubt that it would have been duly inserted.

It was not until the last year of Abbott's services as town-clerk that an appointed place was provided in which the town could hold its meetings. The matter fell out in this wise. In the spring of 1681, the General Assembly ordered the various town councils to regulate and license the sale of "strong drink" in their respective towns. Accordingly the council in Providence sent for John Whipple, Junior, and Mary Pray, as being "the Likelyest in this Towne," and inquired if either or both of them would undertake to keep a public-house, "provideing both for horse and man for this Ensueing yeare." Whipple eventually refused to provide an acceptable bond, but Mary Pray duly received her license, which permitted her to sell "Beer, wine, or strong Liquors." She was not to allow unlawful games to be carried on in her house, "nor any Evill rule to be kept therein." The license was sufficiently high to augur well for the landlady's prospects of custom, whether in enter-

taining the stranger within her gates, or in dispensing refreshment at the bar. She was to pay the town twenty shillings in money, but "she being willing to give Liberty to the Towne for their town meetings to be kept at her house," the council agreed "to accept of the Same . . . in Lue of the said Twenty shillings."

Two years before Mary Pray's death, which occurred in 1686, her son Ephraim took over the license given her in 1681. Even at this early date a competitor had entered the field, and a rival hostelry now offered the town-meeting not house-room only, but "fire roome and fireing and Candle at all their Towne Meetings and Councill meetings," nor does it admit of doubt that the inner man might also be warmed and comforted should the necessity arise. This enterprising competitor was no other than the "likely" John Whipple, Junior. His father came to Providence in 1637, received a grant of land as a purchaser, united with the church, served seven terms as deputy, and in 1674 had a license granted him to keep "an ordinary." When he died, in 1685, he left a large property in land, but the means at his disposal "for the Entertainment of strangers" impress us as somewhat scanty. He had one feather bed, seven pewter platters, five pewter porringers, three old spoons, — and a family of eleven children. His son, John, Junior, kept a tavern for many years on what is now Mill Street, and a younger son, Joseph, was

also at one time a licensed innkeeper within the town of Providence.

A care to provide for the comfort and entertainment of strangers is but one of many indications that a period of recovery from the devastation caused by the war had fairly begun. As early as 1679, Richard Smith of Cawcawmsquussick wrote of the harvest: "a greate yeare for frute and Coren; Sider in abundance." It was in February, 1679, that a price-list of land and livestock was drawn up for the guidance of the assessors who were about to levy a town rate. From this we learn that improved meadow land was worth four pounds an acre. Planting-land brought three pounds. Unimproved land was estimated at three shillings. Oxen were valued at four pounds; cows at three pounds. A four-year-old horse was also quoted at three pounds. Hogs were rated at fifteen shillings, and sheep at four shillings. Although it is explicitly stated that "the Rate-makers are not soe strictly tyed up to the instructions . . . but that they have a Libberty to vary therefrom," there is no reason to doubt that the above list gives a fair average price for staple commodities. The price of unimproved land, it will be remarked, had gone from sixpence per acre to three shillings, in thirty years.

In the records of 1680 there appears another unmistakable symptom of progress. Pardon Tillinghast asked for, and obtained, "a little Spott of Land against [i.e., opposite] his dwelling place (above high-

water mark) of Twenty Foott Square, for building himselfe A store house with the prieweladge of A whorfe Alsoe.” And later in the same year, Arthur Fenner, who was usually in the van of progress, obtained a similar “Spott of ground” forty feet square. At once Edward London, Epenetus Olney, George Shepard, and Samuel Whipple “desired the town” to “accommodate” them in like manner. In 1681, five lots of “forty feet square by the water side” were laid out, and seven in 1682.

These evidences of the small beginnings of the seaport life of Providence take to themselves an additional interest as we read the Report on the Colony of Rhode Island, sent by Governor Peleg Sanford to the Lords of Trade in the same year that Pardon Tillinghast, Arthur Fenner, and others set about building their wharves and storehouses. Governor Sanford says that the colony has no commerce with foreigners or with Indians, that the chief exports are horses and provisions, and that “a small quantity of Barbadoes goods” are imported “for supply of our families.” “For Merchants wee have none, but the most of our Colloney live comfortably by improvinge the wilderness. Wee have no shiping belonging to our Colloney but only a few sloopes.” And he adds that “the great obstruction concerninge trade is the want of Merchants and Men of considerable Estates amongst us.”

Even as the worthy governor wrote, a time was at

hand when men should aspire to larger and more speedy rewards for their labor than could be secured "by improving the wilderness." The "spots of ground" laid out in 1680 and the subsequent years were the modest beginnings of the long row of "warehouse lots," which by the end of another sixty years lined the water side of the Towne Street.

Pardon Tillinghast, whose storehouse and wharf is first on the list, came to Providence as a young man in time to be enrolled among the "quarter-rights" men; and he proved himself a most desirable member of the little township in which he passed the greater part of the remaining seventy years of his long and useful life. He was born in Sussex, England, and is credited with the possession of military experience gained in that notable organization of the church militant, the New Model Army of Oliver Cromwell. Eventually, he appeared in Providence, and bought the home lot which was assigned to Hugh Bewit in the original distribution on the Towne Street. There he built the dwelling-house "against" which his storehouse and "whorfe" were to stand. He was a cooper by trade, but, like most enterprising members of the new settlement, seems to have tried his hand at several vocations. It is certain that he lived at Newport for several years, but the greater part of his busy life was spent at Providence. Here he kept a shop, very probably in the "store house" already mentioned. In 1688, his estate, as rated for taxation,



consisted of shop goods to the value of forty pounds, four acres of enclosed land, eighty acres of vacant land, two shares of meadow, four cows, three heifers, twenty-four sheep, five "horse-kind," two swine, part of two boats, and "a little sorry housing." In his later years, — and he lived to be ninety-six, — he withdrew from active business, but he had large sums of money out at interest, as appears by the inventory of his estate. The appraisers' list reads: "due by bonds £1,133. 18. 0; due by book £91; bills of credit £155. 4. 0; silver money £88. 18. 0." His family plate was summed up in "one silver spoone."

Although Pardon Tillinghast's career as a man of business was marked both by enterprise and success, he is most conspicuously remembered for his connection with the Baptist church at Providence, where the recollection of his services and benefits has been gratefully cherished. He was a firm believer in the rite known as the "Laying on of Hands," which formed the distinguishing tenet of the so-called "Six Principle Baptists," and missed no opportunity to testify to the truth, as it had been made manifest to his spirit. As an elder of the church, such opportunities were frequently at his disposal, and we cannot doubt that many a Providence congregation left the sanctuary much edified by his eloquence.

Like all elders in the Baptist communion, Elder Tillinghast received no pay for his services. The ministers of those days were not judged unworthy of

their hire, but superior to it. In the present instance the modern procedure was reversed, and instead of Pardon Tillinghast receiving a salary from the members of his church, he presented his little flock with their first meeting-house. In 1711 he deeded "his house called the Baptist meeting house, situated between the Town Street and salt water, together with the lot whereon said meeting house standeth, to the church, for the Christian love, good will and affection which I bear to the church of Christ in said Providence." This building is described by tradition as being "in the shape of a hay cap, with a fireplace in the middle, the smoke escaping from a hole in the roof." Crude as this sounds, we may well believe that the comfort of this primitive structure far surpassed that of the more elaborate meeting-houses of the later eighteenth century, which were totally unprovided with either chimney or fire. The building stood on the corner of North Main and Smith Streets.

Although Elder Tillinghast has put himself on record as unwilling to take any form of payment for his services, he also declared that it was "the duty of a church to contribute towards the maintenance of their elders," and as such should be "performed to such as might come after him." It was not "performed," however, until the pastorate of Doctor Manning, late in the eighteenth century. The one remaining family burying-ground of those belonging to the families on the Towne Street is that of Pardon

Tillinghast. It is on Benefit Street, at the corner of Transit, and contains a monument to the memory of the founder of the American branch of the family. Pardon Tillinghast was twice married. He had twelve children and seventy-nine grandchildren. His numerous descendants have ever been foremost in all good works and public enterprises. Their record redounds no less creditably to the memory of their "unblemished" ancestor than does the long tale of his worth to their pride and honor.

In the course of nature it was not to be expected that the party of progress should have everything its own way. An amusing incident, which may serve to illustrate not only the poverty, but the lack of enterprise of the average townsman, is first touched on in the town-meeting of December 7, 1681, when "one Thomas Copper" is described as being in the town "only upon sufferance" and yet "like to make great waste of our pitch wood by running of tar," wherefore the town is "prayed" "to take some speedy care to prevent it." This timely warning did not fail of its effect. Only a week had passed before it was voted that "whereas this Towne of providence hath long Experienced the Great Bennifitt that they have had by there pitchwood for Candell light," as well as the "great Inconveiniencye which they may be made partakers of" should this blessing be snatched from them, all persons who are determined "to propagate the running of Tarr from pitchwood; As also of

pitchwood to make Coal," are strictly forbidden to engage in these nefarious practices under penalty of forfeiting the products of their labor, — unless, indeed, they are "inhabitants" of the town. In that case each man may "run" ten gallons "for his own proper use." Candles were still too great a luxury for use in illumination, unless it was desired to watch the flight of time.

In this same year (1681) the sale of the house and lot of one John Jones was ordered by the town, "by reason of his incapassity to maintaine himselfe and make the best of his Estate." The sale was made to the highest bidder, "by the inch of the Candle." When once the inch-mark was reached, the hammer fell, and the property changed owners. John Jones's estate was handed over to Thomas Harris for the sum of £17. 6. 0. He was to pay one third in silver, and "the other two Thirds as money, & in such things as two men appoynted by the Towne shall see it be needfull for the said Joanes releife." Two years later "John Jones his lott" again makes its appearance, as the first piece of real estate on record to be provided with a sidewalk. Joseph Smith was given "forty feet square of land all the breadth of the said lott, upon this Condition that he shall lay a row of steping stones acrossse the said lotts End close by the fence for people to passe, & repasse upon."

It was not long after that expansion of the town's trade which found expression in a demand for

“whorfes,” that Roger Williams, the founder of that church whose “hay-cap”-like meeting-house he did not live to see, wrote to his friend Governor Bradstreet, of Massachusetts, his last letter of which we have knowledge. This letter dwells especially on his work as a preacher. He says that “being old and weak and bruised,” and having “lameness on both feet,” he has collected, by his fireside, “the discourses which (by many tedious journeys) I have had with the scattered English at Narragansett, before the war and since.” They amount to “near 30 sheets” of his writing, and there is “no controversy in them.” He wishes to appeal, through Bradstreet, to any “that hath a shilling and a heart to countenance and promote such a soul work” as the printing of these discourses, or sermons. “Sir, I shall humbly wait for your advice,” he concludes, “where it may best be printed, at Boston or Cambridge, and for how much, the printer finding the paper.” [Dated, Providence, May 6, 1682.]

It would seem that the Narraganset trading-post was utilized by Roger Williams as a mission station to almost the close of his life. Callender says in his well-known *Historical Discourse*, that he was told in 1738, by people who had known Roger Williams, “that he used to uphold a public worship, sometimes, tho’ not weekly [presumably at Providence] . . . and he used to go once a month, for many years, to Mr. Smith’s in the Narragansett, for the same end.”

It was, at the time of writing the letter quoted above, but a little over six months since Roger Williams had ceased to take an active part in the administration of town affairs. In the latter part of the previous October his name appears in an official capacity for the last time on the town records. No doubt his few remaining days were passed for the most part by his fireside, in revising his "discourses." He died in the spring of 1683. A certain John Thornton, of Providence, writing on May 10 to his friend Samuel Hubbard at Newport, says: "The Lord hath arrested by death our ancient approved friend Mr. Roger Williams." No more definite record of his end exists, nor is it known definitely where he was buried.

Roger Williams's second daughter, Freeborn, has the key to the first chapter of her history given in a letter of her father's, written in 1656, to Governor Endicott, of Massachusetts. It reads: "this bearer Mr. Hart a Young shipmaster (who now maketh Love to my second daughter Freeborne) is bound for Salem about a Vessell." As a young shipmaster, Hart naturally found Newport a more promising base of operations than poor little Providence, and there he and his wife made their home, and that of their four children.

In 1671, Thomas Hart died, and twelve years later his widow began the second chapter in her life's romance. In the opening years of the history of the little town of Providence, we may fancy Roger

Williams's family of five children living on the Towne Street, in a state of almost comfortless simplicity, to be sure, but with the contentment and childish gayety that thrive on a hardy open-air existence. On the next home lot to the north dwelt Richard Scott,—likewise a “first-comer,”—with his family. Roger and Friend Richard were far from seeing eye to eye in matters of creed, or as regards that social deportment which is a part of the Quaker doctrine; but the boundaries of the home lots were seldom marked by fences in those days, and it is probable that complete liberty of action and of conscience was found in all neighborly intercourse between the families of Williams and Scott. While Roger Williams might have forbidden his children to partake of his Lord's Supper in the company of those whom he regarded as steeped in the heresy of the Quakers, there is no evidence to show that he would have extended his prohibition to clam-digging, or even mudpie-making.

Hannah Scott was the second daughter of the family, a girl seven years younger than Freeborn Williams, whom she must have known chiefly as the companion of her older sister, Mary Scott. When, in 1667, Hannah married Walter Clarke and went to her new home in Newport, Freeborn Hart had already a family of three children growing up around her in that pleasant town. Four years later, in 1671, Thomas Hart, shipmaster, died, and it was found

that he had named Walter Clarke as one of the executors of his will. At that time Walter Clarke had barely begun his long political career, which fills the years from 1673 to his death in 1714. He was four times assistant, six times governor of the colony, and twenty-three times deputy governor. It was as governor that he wrote the letter to Captain Fenner, quoted in an earlier chapter, wherein he animadverts on Fenner's attitude, and explains the position of Newport towards "the outlying towns" at the time of the Indian war. He was a widower with three children when he married Hannah Scott, within a year of his first wife's death. In 1681, he was once more a widower, with a family of seven children, the oldest of whom was seventeen. His experience of life in a seaport town had doubtless convinced him of the truth of the adage that "there are as good fish in the sea as ever were caught," for within two years he was again married, and this time to Freeborn Williams Hart. On her death, in 1710, he endowed a fourth wife with his worldly goods, and she survived him.

When Freeborn Hart became Freeborn Clarke, and thereby consented to take the place of mother to seven stepsons and daughters as well as to her own four children, we may wonder if a thought crossed her mind of the possibilities involved in such an arrangement. Whether this was the case or not, she must have watched, with that tender interest which the recollection of our childhood's days awakens in



each of us, the wooing of the daughter of her old playmate, Hannah Scott, by her own son, James.

We may assume that Frances Clarke was married to James Hart in 1691, or 1692. The chapter of their romance drew swiftly to a tragic end. In 1693, Frances — even then a girl of only twenty — was laid in her grave, whither in less than a month her young husband followed her.

The third daughter of Roger Williams was called Mercy. When twenty-one she married Resolved Waterman. The father of Resolved, Richard by name, came to Providence in 1638, and was one of the twelve original proprietors. Later, he became one of the purchasers of Shawomet, or Warwick, and was among the little band of Gortonists taken to Boston by the Massachusetts crusaders, in 1643. Waterman was, with the others, arraigned before the court at Boston. A fine was imposed, which he paid, but was once again arrested, and “being found erroneous, heretical, and obstinate,” was sentenced to imprisonment until the following September. He was then banished from Massachusetts, and forbidden to return under penalty of death. The temptation to wander within the precincts of the Bay Colony can hardly have been great, unless, indeed, Waterman had something of the missionary spirit in his composition. Later, he appears to have become a Quaker, for his death is noted on the records of the Society of Friends. His son, Resolved, who was a boy at the

time of the raid on Shawomet, died in 1670, after a married life of eleven years, leaving a wife and five children. Seven years after his death his widow married Samuel Winsor, also of Providence. Their son Samuel became, in 1733, minister of the Baptist church, where he spent a long, and doubtless a useful, pastorate of twenty-five years. Morgan Edwards speaks of him as "a man remarkable for preaching against paying ministers, and for refusing invitations to Sunday dinners for fear they should be considerations for Sunday sermons."

Roger Williams was blessed with three sons as well as the daughters whose biographies have been<sup>r</sup> outlined. Of his sons, the oldest was Providence, born in 1638. He made his home at Newport, and was a shopkeeper and shipmaster, if we may trust circumstantial evidence as to his means of livelihood. He had a sloop, and of sufficient size to "clear the town of all the Indians" remaining as prisoners in the hands of the English after the close of the war, in 1676. In 1682 the town of Providence gave him "a little piece of Ground to sett up a ware-house, with the privilege of a warfe, Against the Towne lane by Daniel Williams." The aforesaid "Towne lane" was the present Power Street. Providence Williams died unmarried, in 1686. His inventory plainly shows the nature of his business, and gives some interesting indications also of the wants of his customers, who (to judge from his stock in trade) were red as well as

white. Among his effects were three pairs of steel-yards, two pairs of brass scales and a nest of weights, twenty-five gallons of rum, twenty pipes, a broken parcel of silk, beads of glass, jew's-harps, buttons, about four thousand pins, five Bermuda baskets, knives, scissors, knitting-needles, silk crape, a Bible, and a "lex mercatory" (*Lex Mercatoria*).

The second brother, Daniel, took up his abode in Providence, where he found ample opportunity to satisfy such trading instincts as he possessed by dealing in real estate. In 1662, he and his younger brother Joseph were each granted "a purchase right of land," in consideration "of some Courtesies received from Mr. [Roger] Williams," although the town at the same time ordered that no other request for purchase rights should be granted. A year later the purchasers concluded that there should "not be any more people acomedated with land as purchasers." It was fifteen years after he was enrolled among the Providence purchasers before Daniel took to himself a wife. In 1676, he married Rebecca, the widow of Nicholas Power, whose husband — just a year before — had been killed in the Great Swamp Fight of December, 1675. Her marriage with Daniel Williams was, says Roger Williams, who as town-clerk entered it on the records, "the first Mariage since God mercifully restored the Towne of Providence."

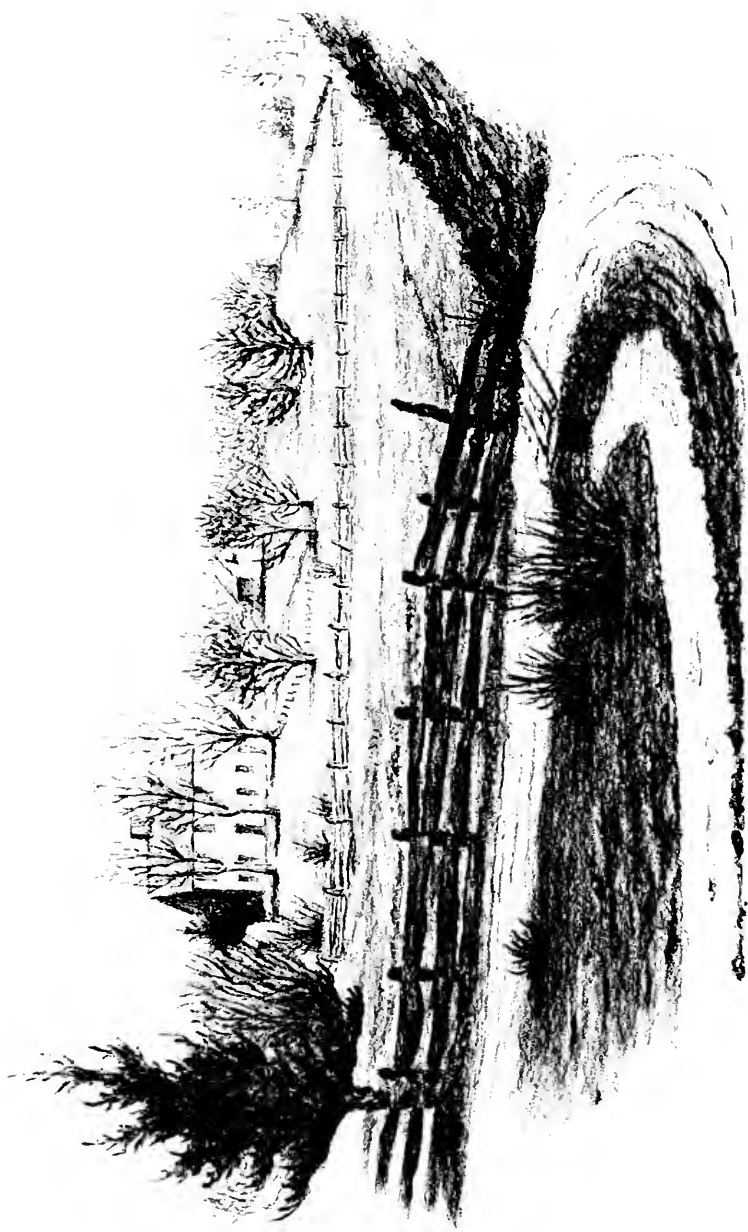
In 1710, Daniel found, or made, occasion to write

a letter to the town of Providence respecting the bounds of the Providence purchase, and in this epistle he says of his father: "Can you find such another now alive, or in this age? He gave away his lands and other estate, to them that he thought most in want, until he gave away all, so that he had nothing to help himself, so that he not being in a way to get for his supply, and being ancient, it must needs pinch somewhere. I do not say what I have done for both father and mother: I judge they wanted nothing that was convenient for ancient people. What my father gave, I believe he had a good intent in it, and thought God would provide for his family. He never gave me but about three acres of land, and but a little afore he deceased. It looked hard, that out of so much at his disposing, I should have so little, and he so little." All honor to Daniel for his filial piety! Lest we should be led to think of him as unduly "pinched" by his praiseworthy efforts in behalf of his aged parents, it may be as well to bear in mind the very ample provision which he made for the needs of his own family, just before his death, two years after penning the above letter. He conveyed by deeds, lands and dwelling-houses to his two younger sons; he provided "reasonable privileges" to his wife; and deeded to his daughter Patience, five acres of land, "a negro girl Ann," four cows, and "the goods she hath in chests and trunks." The eldest son, Peleg, must have been already provided for, and probably, as being the

### JOSEPH WILLIAMS HOUSE

Built by the son of Roger Williams. Formerly stood on Elmwood Avenue and was torn down in 1886. From a water-color drawing made in 1858 by Edward L. Peckham, in the Rhode Island Historical Society.









eldest son, received a more liberal share of the estate than his brothers.

The third and youngest of the Williams brothers was named, appropriately, Joseph. As a boy he was somewhat delicate. In 1660, his father wrote to Winthrop: "My youngest son, Joseph, was troubled with a spice of an epilepsy: We used some remedies, but it hath pleased God, by his taking of tobacco, perfectly, as we hope, to cure him." Does it argue degeneracy, or progression, that tobacco is, nowadays, warranted to kill, — not cure? When a young man of twenty-six, Joseph married Lydia, the second daughter and youngest child of our old acquaintance, Thomas Olney, Senior. Perhaps he was a member of the valiant Train Band, commanded by his father, whose authority, it is well to remember, was not to be "eclipsed" even by that of the colony's commander-in-chief, Captain Arthur Fenner.

Joseph Williams's gravestone still testifies to his services in the Indian war of 1676. He was a man of considerable prominence, and not without honor even in his own country. He served repeatedly as deputy in the colonial assembly, as member of the town council, and as assistant. When he died, in 1724, he left an estate of seven hundred and thirty acres. The dwelling-house, orchard, etc., at Mashapaug went to his son James, who was especially enjoined "to provide for his Mother my said loveing Wife Lidia Williams all things that shee shall have

neede of and that are necessary for an antiant woman dureing the full term of her naturall Life." His "loveing wife" survived him only three weeks. She, her husband, and many of their descendants were buried on the homestead farm at Mashapaug, on land which is now within the limits of Roger Williams Park, in Providence.

There can be little reason to doubt that the last years of Roger Williams — "The Father of Providence, the Founder of the Colony, and of Liberty of Conscience" — were passed, as he himself describes them, "by the fireside," amid his children and grandchildren. The increasing infirmities of age would have prevented his taking an active part in the affairs of the town, had he not been living close at hand, and we may plausibly assume that he lived with his son Daniel, at the south end of the Towne Street, as is suggested by Daniel's letter, already quoted.



## Chapter V

### A GROUP OF NEWCOMERS AND KING'S CHURCH

THE history of the first sixty years of the Providence Plantation is almost unmarked by attempts to mitigate the solitude of the wilderness through intercourse with other communities. The nearest neighbors were at Rehoboth, a flourishing settlement of the Plymouth Colony, with whose well-to-do townspeople Providence maintained a somewhat desultory interchange of commodities and courtesies, — an interchange brought about rather by the necessities of circumstance than by any bond of sympathetic fellowship. Indeed, the “proximity of Providence . . . where there was a universal toleration . . . and principle, fancy, whim and conscience, all conspired to lessen the veneration for ecclesiastical authority,” was not regarded with unqualified approbation by her neighbors in Massachusetts. But as the years slipped by, and the cause of truth was seen to prosper, in spite of dealings with the unregenerate on the west bank of the Seekonk, disquietude died away. At length the demands of constant intercourse made apparent the need of better facilities for transportation. Before 1668 we find a ferry of some sort at “the place called the Narrow passage,” where Red Bridge now stands. That

it speedily justified its existence may be inferred from a request of Captain Andrew Edmonds, to the effect that he might receive at the hands of his grateful countrymen "in referance to his service done in the warr time . . . aboute two Acars of Land . . . neere the water side at the place . . . commonly Called the narrow passage . . . for the building him a house; he intending the keeping of a Ferry he saith." His petition was presented in 1679, after the cessation of the alarms and excursions incident to King Philip's War. The town met their first veteran more than halfway, and promptly presented him with "four Acars of Land . . . retaining to the townes use a suitable and Conveinent prievellledge not with standing."

Although the bounds of the Captain's grant were not "laid down" until 1687, we cannot suppose that he delayed many months before putting up his house and "keeping" his ferry. Before the surveyor's formalities in this matter were entered on the town records, the pressure of public opinion had brought into existence another outlet for the growing industry and enterprise of the little settlement. During the interim between haytime and harvest, in the summer of 1684, orders were issued to the town-clerk — the son of our old acquaintance, Thomas Olney, Senior — "to send some lines unto the Towne of Rehoboth," on behalf of the town of Providence, to say that "Our Towne haveing taken into Consideration the Necses-

sitye of a Road-way through the Countrey for Travellers to passe, have Errected . . . a way through our Townshipp over Pawtuckett River . . . a little up the streame from the place where mr Blaxton his house formerly stood, at the ancient Roade way the which leadeth to the plaine on your side of the River called the westerne Plaine” (now called Seekonk Plain), and that notice of this improvement was thus formally given that the townspeople of Rehoboth “may doe the like.” “Mr. Blaxton his house” was the well-known residence of the recluse and student, William Blackstone. It stood on the east bank of the Pawtucket, or Blackstone River, about three miles above the present city of Pawtucket, and just within that famous debatable ground of the eighteenth century known as the “Attleborough Gore.” “The county road leading towards Mendon” was also laid out by Rehoboth in the fall of this same year, and served to connect Providence, as well as Rehoboth, with the settlements farther north.

From this time forward new settlers of practical ability and progressive ideas began to appear in the town. They were heralded by a vanguard of transitory visitors of the type of John Brooks of Watertown, who brought to Providence to sell, in 1699, “a percell of Goodes to the value of 10 lb. . . . being Hatts, stuffs, & silks, & some other small Matters as Needles &c.” This method of bringing goods in easily portable quantities obtained until well into

the eighteenth century. A room was hired, wares were displayed, and after a few days of barter and bargain the pack was again made ready for the road, lightened by the amount of the peddler's bill for board and lodging, if not by the local demand for such luxuries as hats and needles.

The casual stranger was, indeed, expected to show cause for coming at all, and also to explain why he should not be speeded on his way without delay. At first it appeared as though the commendable improvements just enumerated were made rather for the purpose of getting rid of would-be immigrants with celerity and despatch than with any desire to induce outsiders to make Providence their home. Men, women, and children were unceremoniously warned out of the town for fear that in time to come they might prove "chargeable." Particular cases proved so numerous that in 1687 a general order was issued to the "select men" to "Remoove out of our towne all such persons who in their judgments may be Chargeable or troublesom."

There were exceptions to the rule, however, and no little perspicacity was displayed in their selection. A notable case in point is that of Gideon Crawford, who, in 1687, "desired of the towne to Reside amongst them, & here to follow his way of dealeing in goods." The town promptly "granted him Liberty so to doe." This leniency was amply justified. Before the month was ended the "new-comer" had

married Freelove Fenner, the daughter of Captain Arthur, a woman who inherited a goodly share of her father's energy and business ability, and proved herself a veritable helpmate to the rising young merchant. Crawford's "way of dealeing in goods" was sufficiently acceptable to justify him, three years later, in asking for "aboutt thirtie Foot of ground Laying by the watter syd," next the warehouse lot of his father-in-law, and across the way from that lot on the Towne Street where, at a later day, his own mansion-house was to stand. The memory of his warehouse and wharf is still preserved for us in the busy thoroughfare of Crawford Street, where paving-stones have displaced the river-bank, and electric cars grind back and forth in lieu of the leisurely-moving oldtime sloops and schooners.

Here warehouses were built, with a wharf alongside the channel, and soon a flourishing business was established by this canny Scot, whose estate, on his death in 1707, amounted to no less than £1556, exclusive of "book debts," or amounts due for goods sold on credit.

Two boats are found in the list of Gideon Crawford's worldly goods, one, "out of repare," the other a flat-bottomed affair, valued at one pound, fifteen shillings. His supply of "shopp Goods" came to £355. 9. 0, and there were £775. 10. 0 due "by bills & bonds." Several articles of actual luxury appear among the items of household furniture. There are

"Table Cloaths & Napkins, 1 lookeing glass, Window hangers, Tables & Carpetts," for a carpet was in that day and generation the covering for a table or cupboard, not for a floor. The supply of "plate" is set down at £15. 11. 0. The "bookes" came to £1. 12. 0. His capable widow at once determined to continue to deal in goods, in her husband's stead, that her two sons, at that time nineteen and fourteen years of age, might in due course succeed to a well-established business. She survived her husband only by five years, but they were years of moment, for the Crawford family in particular and for the town of Providence in general. To her oldest boy — "my son William" — she bequeathed all her part of the sloop *Dolphin*, "it being already registered in his name"; while to both sons, William and John, was left her half "of the sloop building by Nathaniel Brown of Rehoboth." Brown was another "new-comer," and the proprietor of the first shipyard on the West Side of the Great River.

Mrs. Crawford's sons married sisters, the daughters of Colonel Joseph Whipple, who at one time kept an inn on Mill Street, but is better known to local fame as a well-to-do merchant, and colonel of the regiment of militia raised on the mainland in 1719. He long outlived his sons-in-law, William and John Crawford, who died in 1720 and 1719, respectively. These young men were well entitled to be classed as merchants, in the larger sense of that somewhat elastic term.



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Captain John Crawford died when twenty-six. He owned books which were valued at £8. 10. 0, while his family plate, including "silver spoones Porren-gers Cupps pepper boxes & grator," amounted to £30. 10. 0. There were also "2 Jappand Tables." "2 boats in theire now Condition" are put down at £10. "1 New sloop upon the stocks almost finished" was judged to be worth £82. "Lumber on bord the sloop *Indian King*" was appraised at £89. 07. 0, and "the said sloop and appurtinances" at £210. His stock in trade included "5 pipes of wine," molasses, brandy, cider, indigo, "stript holland, muslin, Calico, bengall tape, Cambrick, kenting, Alamo-de & persian silck & handkercheifs; Romaul Lining, Cantaloones Crape and Caleminco," — stuffs whose very names are mysteriously suggestive of the burning sun and spicy breezes of the southern seas.

It would be interesting to know if Captain John Crawford purchased his stock in trade of the merchants of Newport, already a well-known centre of maritime interests, or if the Dutch served as the means of communication between the East and this remote corner of the Western world. Or it may be that, even at this early date in the commercial affairs of Providence, the wide-awake Yankees of Boston were shipping occasional lots of assorted merchandise to be sold on commission by the Providence traders. Some thirty years later, this was the regular course of procedure. Not until several generations have come

and gone shall we find Providence merchantmen clearing for the Orient.

Both John and William Crawford lived at the north end of the Towne Street, — John on the old John Whipple Inn (1664) lot, at the corner of Mill Street. His next-door neighbor was Jonathan Sprague, famed throughout the country-side for the rigor and vigor with which he upheld the orthodoxy of the "Six-Principle" Baptists. Captain Crawford's house was greatly admired by his friends and neighbors, and served as a landmark in that end of the town for many years.

The personal estate of Captain Crawford's brother, Major William, is almost overwhelming in the sumptuousness of its household appointments. The different rooms are carefully designated. There was an "East Chamber," a northwest chamber, a "Greate Chamber," a "West Chamber," a garret, a "Greate Roome" (evidently the living-room), a "Bed Roome," a dairy, lean-to, and kitchen. Then come the various warehouses, — "the Rum warehouse, the Salt warehouse, the north warehouse, the shopp, and the back shopp." Besides these accommodations, the Major owned a "new house," and two barns. His "sloope *Sarah* boate," evidently named for his wife, Sarah Whipple, was appraised at four hundred pounds. In the "back shopp" were goods amounting to sixteen pounds, the greater part being tools of different sorts, while the shop proper held

PETER RANDALL HOUSE

Opposite the North Burying Ground. Built about 1755.  
From a photograph taken in 1902.

JOHN CRAWFORD HOUSE

Mill Street. Built about 1710, torn down 1898. From  
a photograph in the Rhode Island Historical Society  
taken in 1865.







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a choice and varied assortment of dry goods. Here were combs, buttons, gloves, "buckles of divers sorts," holland, diaper, silk crape, and poplin, together with whetstones, seeds, weights and scales, scythes, beeswax, and "odd things."

The Major was also prepared to furnish rum, sugar, molasses, salt, wool, tobacco, and grain to the public of Providence and vicinity. His market extended up the river to Pawtucket and the farms of Smithfield, southward to the settlers along the line of the Narragansett shore, and included also the towns of northeastern Connecticut, — Woodstock, Plainfield, and Pomfret. It is not to be wondered at that when the road connecting Pomfret with Providence was completed in 1721, after thirteen years of toil and stress, the first care of its capable supervisor, Nathaniel Sessions, was to import a load of West-India goods from the enterprising market-town at the head of Narragansett Bay for the delectation of his inland neighbors. It was then ten years since the town of Providence had "stated" a highway from Captain Fenner's dwelling, "westward up into the Countrey towards Plainfield." It is exceedingly doubtful, however, if this highway could be traced otherwise than by the surveyor's slashes and blazes, notwithstanding the fact that a "draught of the said high way" was duly presented to the town, and formally "perused," and approved. In 1711, the Colonial Assembly ordered a highway "laid out . . .

through Providence, Warwick, and West Greenwich to Plainfield," and in 1714 this long-contemplated improvement became a reality.

The year 1711 was signalized by another undertaking of great moment. There still exists recorded evidence to show that in January, 1711, there was "a Bridg building or at least some progress made in order thereunto, over the passage at way Bossett." Seven years earlier, in July, 1704, it had been suggested to the town-meeting that public opinion should be sounded as to the advisability of building a bridge "from the Towne side of the salt Water . . . begining against the West End of the lott whereon Daniel Abbott his dwelling house standeth & so Cross the Water unto the hill Called Wayboysett." For, since the day when George Shepard's donation had been conscientiously returned to him because of the town's failure "to maintain a bridge at Waybossett," the "passing to & from" the east and west banks of the river had been accomplished by means of "Cannoes & Boates, Rideing & Carting, & Swimming over of Cattell from side to side." Nor was the voyage without its difficulties. The town records gravely deplore the fact that the stream is "often times Running so swift, & many times Rough Water by Reason of stormy Winds, whereby neither Cannoes Boates nor Cattell swimming can make any certain place to land, but must land where they can git on shore."



It was in furtherance of this desirable termination of the voyage, that the town fathers were moved to take into consideration "how greatly detrementall" it would be if there should be "a grant of ware house lotts all along the Salt Water by the Towne Streete," and to decree that no "ware house lotts" should be granted from Crawford Street on the south to "Thomas Olney senior his house lott which was formerly his father's dwelling place," on the north.

Further investigation leads us to invest this outburst of humanitarian enthusiasm with a tinge of self-interest. It can hardly be doubted that the greater proportion of travel across the river, whether by man or beast, was by means of the ford at the "Wading Place," while it is not improbable that the farmers of the settlement objected to see their friends and neighbors in "the compact part of the town" parcel out warehouse lots and wharf privileges among themselves, to the detriment of future "land dividends." There were many wheels within wheels to be found in the governing machinery of the "Proprietors' Meetings" in the town of Providence, nor was the town-meeting unmoved by the opposing claims to consideration of the town and country factions.

The number of warehouse lots was, then, jealously restricted, for the time being. The bridge was, however, permitted to occupy that portion of the water-side explicitly denoted above.

A little to the south of the proposed bridge, and “against the southerne part” of Thomas Field’s home lot, land had already been “laid out” for the first “Towne wharfe.” “The aforesaid Towne Wharfe Place” was never utilized, however, and when the Town Wharf became a reality it was placed just north of Weybosset Bridge, on the shore where now stands the Board of Trade Building. The bridge which was in process of construction in 1711 was, two years later, an accomplished fact, and designated accordingly as “Providence Bridge at Wayboysett” in the records of that year.

Thus far, the tale of the Providence highways has been concerned with such main avenues of traffic as might serve both town and country — although it may be added that the distinction between rural and urban was one of theory far more than of fact. Local accommodation was usually a matter for argument, often decided in favor of the farmers, who were frequently given permission to fence in the highways with their fields, providing cart gates were placed at the roadway for the so-called “Conveniency of Publick passage.”

That this was not always done is shown by the facts narrated in the bill of John Dexter, the grandson of the original proprietor of that name. In 1720, Captain Dexter represented his situation to the town as follows. A lot of eighty acres having been “laid out at Scoakanoxit” to his grandfather, descended by

inheritance to himself. There he had lived, sown his seed, and gathered his crops for six-and-twenty years. Little by little, during that time, the land around him had been taken up, until the road leading to town was completely "stopped up." "So that I cannot . . . come at any Road That Leads Either to mill or market with my Team: nor yet on foot nor on horse back, but as I have leve of Jonathan Sprague to pass through his meadow & . . . I am of opinion that this . . . will be the first precedent that Ever was Set in New England, That after a man has laid out Land & built upon it, for other men to lay out Land Round his, & thereby Compell him to buy a high way to pass off his own land to get into a comon Roade," said the justly indignant farmer, who, not without reason, desired the town "to lay out a convenient high way . . . to pass in from my own Land to the Road which comes out of our Northern woods into the Town."

John Dexter's predicament belongs to a class of fairly numerous instances, although in most cases of the sort a public utility was put forward by the complainant as the real end to be served. When Dexter wrote, a highway had already been "stated" from Richard Arnold's mill on the Wanasquatucket to "Wainskuck," and a similar convenience in getting to town was granted at the instance of the farmers in the Neutaconkonet district. The fertile lands of the outlying country were fast being utilized to raise

crops of grain and hay, and harvests of wool. When once the red man had been so far subdued that his white "brothers" could feel that he existed by sufferance only, a great expansion of the colony's field of agricultural operations took place. Homesteads on the Towne Street fell to pieces, and home lots were used for pasturage, while the Olneys, Whipples, Abbotts, and Watermans went north and west, to take up the land and possess it.

Their place in the town's centre was filled, little by little, with newcomers. Some of these were men of small means, but possessed of energy and ability enabling them to work their way upward. The average newcomer probably remained on sufferance for the first few years. Then he bought a little land, and plied his trade. His business extended, and he opened a shop; perhaps he bought a warehouse lot. The next step would be a wharf and boats, at least a sloop. At this point his investments in real estate would increase, and in the recorded land deeds of these later years of a long and prosperous life, we shall find our investor described as "gentleman," or "Esquire," having previously passed through the various social gradations, as "yeoman," "cooper," "trader," and "merchant."

As a rule, craftsmen were welcomed. In 1704, William Edmunds received a grant of "forty foote square . . . he being desirous to follow his trade of a black smith with in this Towne." William Smith

was "accommodated" in a similar manner, "he being desirous to follow his Weavours Trade." There were pursuits, however, which were forbidden by virtue of that deep-rooted conservatism underlying the mental operations of every New-England farmer. When "one Mr. Gabriel Bernon Exhibited a bill desireing . . . the use of all the pine Trees on the black hill & from thence to Pawtucket River . . . to leake them & make Pitch of the Tirpintine," memories of the "pitch-wood candles" of their grandfathers forbade acquiescence, and the "Towne did not see Cause to Grant the bill."

This enterprising newcomer was one of the most interesting and valuable of those civic acquisitions whose arrival was facilitated by better communication with the outside world. Gabriel Bernon was a Huguenot who saw ample cause to leave his home at Rochelle in those ominous years preceding the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. Like many another of his exiled countrymen he went to Amsterdam, and then crossed the Channel, but after a short residence in England, came to America. As a merchant of Rochelle he had traded in the fish and furs of Canada, and knew well the colonial markets and the fast-growing demand for English goods in the new communities beyond the seas. He became a man of considerable wealth, viewed from the colonial standpoint. Within a short time he had established rosin and salt manufactures at Boston, and was known and

esteemed far beyond the borders of the colony in which he made his new home. From Boston he went to Newport, and from there to Providence, where he became perhaps the leading member in a little group of remarkable men whose influence made itself felt in or about the year 1720, and gained strength and energy from the fact that they made their homes in one neighborhood.

Several of these newcomers took a lively and effective interest in the building-up of religious societies other than that of the Baptists. The first of these efforts to arouse a more active interest in things of the spirit resulted in the establishment of King's Church, in 1722.

For more than twenty years the standard of the Church of England had been ably upheld in Newport, "the metropolis" of the colony. As early as 1702, these worthy subjects of good Queen Anne could boast a church "finished all on the Outside, and the Inside Pewed well, tho' not beautiful." With the aid of the active and benevolent "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel," a clergyman for this parish was soon forthcoming in the person of James Honeyman.

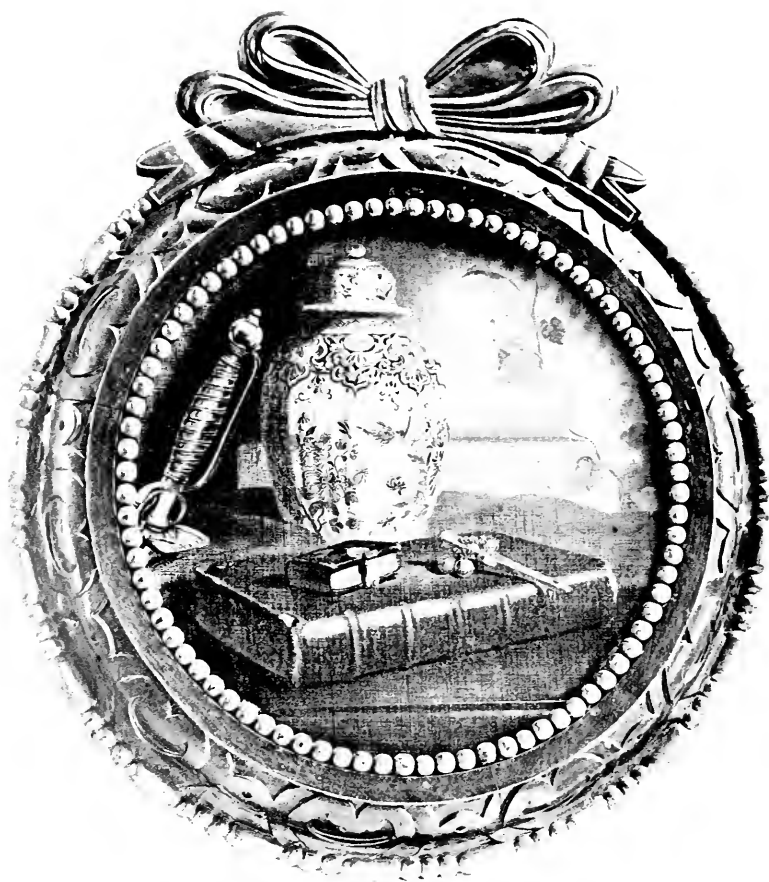
Mr. Honeyman's field of labor was bounded only by the possible extent of a day's ride on horseback. His charge included several towns on the mainland, as well as those on the island of Rhode Island, and it was to him that the little band of the faithful in

RELICS WHICH BELONGED TO GABRIEL BERNON

From an old painting in the Rhode Island Historical Society. The original relics — the sword, delft jar, gold rattle, and psalter — are now owned by the Society.









Providence turned for counsel and guidance. It cannot have been far from 1720 when he wrote to his official superiors in London to represent "very earnestly . . . the Want of a Missionary at the Town called Providence, . . . a Place very considerable from the Number of its Inhabitants," who — sad to say — "were become quite rude, and void of all Knowledge in Religion; yet they were of a good and teachable Disposition." At a later time he wrote that he had preached in Providence "to the greatest Number of People, that he ever had together since he came to America."

This newly awakened interest in religious matters was due in large measure to the efforts of Gabriel Bernon, who had made Providence his home, surely since 1710, and, it may be, even earlier. His request for permission "to leake" the pine trees was made in 1702. Bernon was among the foremost in establishing the Church of England worship at Newport, and in the Narraganset country. The well-known and indefatigable Doctor MacSparran had been recently settled as incumbent of the last-mentioned parish, and to him Bernon and his friend, "Mr. Nathaniel Brown of Kittlepoint," applied for aid to institute a similar service at Providence.

"Nathaniel Brown of Kittlepoint" has already figured in the industrial annals of the town. He it was who built the sloop described as in process of construction by Mrs. Freelove Crawford, in her last

will and testament. In January, 1712, he was given half an acre of land "on the East side of Waybosset Neck adjoineing to the salt water . . . for building of vessells thereon." This grant was near the corner of what are now Pine and Orange Streets. At a later date it became part of a larger shipyard belonging to Roger Kinnicutt, likewise a newcomer from the Bay Colony. No sooner was his grant recorded than the enterprising Mr. Brown was ready for business, and in May of the same year he was filling orders for the mariners and merchants of Providence. His interest in promoting the cause of the Church of England in the town was as practically heartfelt as had been his zeal to establish a business connection. When the moment for action arrived, and his fellow-worshippers resolved "to get a minister and live like Christians," it was Nathaniel Brown who gave the lot on the Towne Street, where the present St. John's Church stands, "for the Glory and Honour of God, and Promoting the Society and Communion of the Church of England in these Remote partes of the World, as the same is by law established."

Next door to the Church with which he thus identified himself Nathaniel Brown's dwelling-house was to stand. Mr. Dorr tells us that it was of two stories, with a huge brick chimney at the north end, and that it was standing in 1842. It is interesting to think of the pious warden of King's Church setting up his household gods on the home lot of the Quaker en-

thusiast, Richard Scott, who, many a long year before, had labored in the interests of the missionaries of the Friends as they testified to the faith that was in them. On the opposite side of the Towne Street, a little further north, lived Gabriel Bernon himself. Next door to Bernon was William Outram or Antrim, whom Bernon briefly characterizes in a letter to the Reverend Mr. Honeyman as "a mathematician."

It was through the exertions and influence of such men as these, backed by certain of the more progressive among the descendants of the "first-comers," that the necessary funds for building King's Church were obtained. The estimable Doctor Humphreys, historian of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, has given us an account of the Providence of his day, from the Church of England standpoint. "The People . . . were negligent of all Religion till about the Year 1722," he says; "the very best were such as called themselves Baptists or Quakers, but it was feared many were Gortoneans or Deists." He describes the town as twenty miles square, with a population at the time of writing (1728) of about four thousand. As for the people, who "live dispersed over this large Township, they are industrious, employed chiefly in Husbandry & Handy crafts, tho' very lately they have begun to enter upon Foreign Trade & Navigation." "Out of all these, there was a small Number, who . . . seriously reflecting on that irreligious State wherein they lived . . . began to

gather Contributions among themselves. . . . The Chief Contributor was Colonel Joseph Whipple," who gave one hundred pounds and "victualed" the laborers. This was the father-in-law of William and John Crawford. He died in 1746, at the age of eighty-five. Generous outsiders also contributed.

Not improbably the two hundred pounds given by the people of the island of Rhode Island, and the one hundred pounds which came from Boston, were obtained through the efforts of Gabriel Bernon, who was well known in both places, and esteemed by all who knew him. Altogether, there were seven hundred and seventy pounds available to pay for the "Timber Building . . . 62 Feet in Length, 41 in Breadth, & 26 high," which was "raised on St. Barnabas Day, 1722."

Just a week before this date, Gabriel Bernon had written to Mr. Honeyman to represent the qualifications essential for the future rector of King's Church in Providence. After some discussion of the subject, Mr. Pigot, who had been sent to Stratford, Connecticut, by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, was removed to Providence, where, says Bernon, we pray God he will prove "a good and orthodox minister." And indeed, this worthy divine appears to have creditably fulfilled all expectations. His congregation of about one hundred received constant additions, and in the last year of his pastorate — 1727 — he reported to the Society that he had baptized "eleven

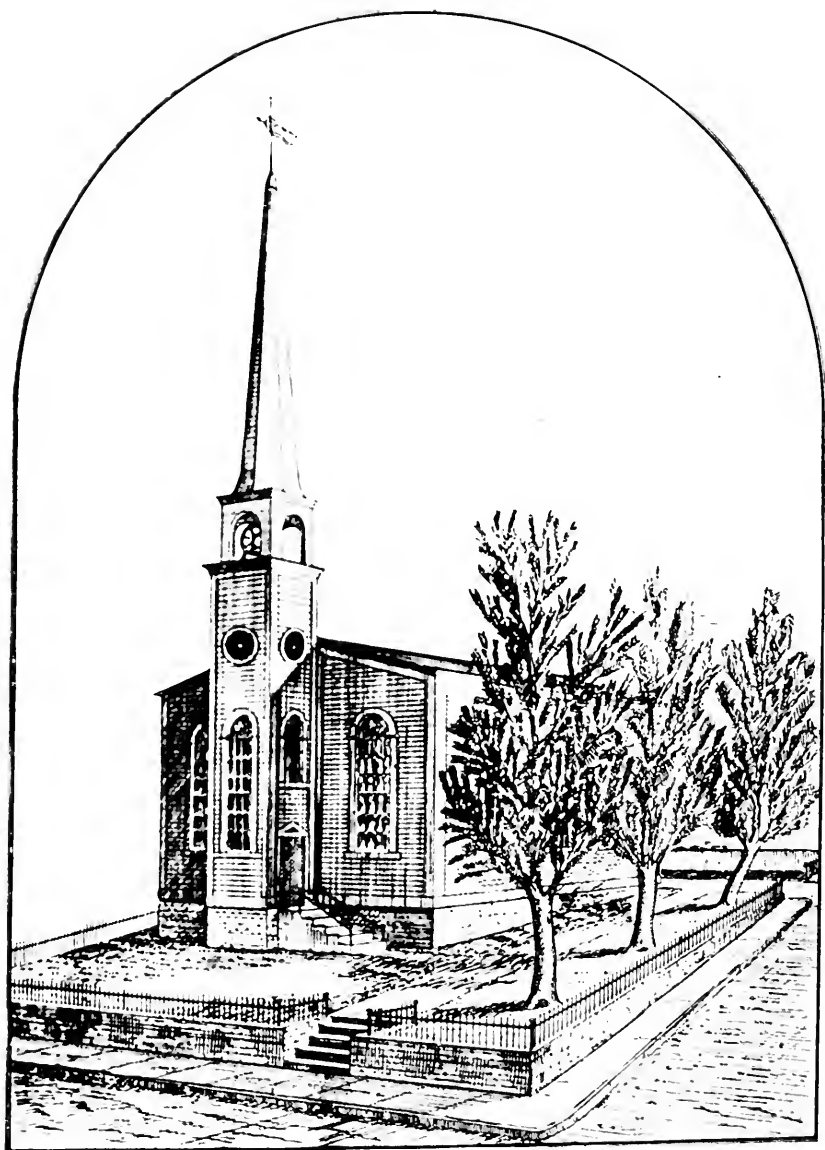
ST. JOHN'S CHURCH

Built 1722 and demolished 1810. From a drawing, made by Zachariah Allen, in the Rhode Island Historical Society Library.

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Children, three grown Persons, and the Communicants were forty-four."

The Reverend Mr. Pigot is said to have been "of a roving disposition." Whether owing to the attractions of the "open road," or for other reasons, his residence in Providence terminated in 1727. His successor, one Joseph O'Hara, left behind him a record far from enviable. His estimable contemporary, Mr. Comer, a Baptist minister of Newport, states in his diary that after O'Hara "had preached two or three days, . . . he published himself to Mrs. Alice Whipple of Providence," — in all probability the daughter of Colonel Joseph, whose social prominence and liberal contributions must have entitled him to a leading position among the members of this little flock. But alas! for Mrs. Alice's hopes of happiness. The rumor that O'Hara was already married crept abroad, and was speedily confirmed by the appearance of his wife on the scene of action. The unabashed divine vehemently denied her claims, but, says Comer, "he was defeated of his intended match." The pious narrator straightway proceeds to point the moral of his tale. "'T is observed," he tells us, "that the last Lord's Day he preached in the church, he was by an extraordinary gust of wind forced out of the church in the time of service. It blew in a large window at the west end, and very much shook the whole house. The next Lord's day his people refused his preaching."

O'Hara's ejection was but temporary. For some eight months longer he persisted in holding his position and in fulfilling some portion of its functions. It was not until his forcible "breaking open the doors of the church, which his people had fastened up," having first signified their lack of sympathy by "hauling him out of his pulpit," that the turbulent priest was finally sent to jail at Newport as a disturber of the peace, and thus effectually disposed of.

O'Hara was succeeded by Arthur Browne, also an Irishman, who had been educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and is said to have come to America with Dean Berkeley, in 1729. It was in the following year that Browne entered on his pastorate in Providence, where he soon won the respect and affection of his people. A glebe of eighteen acres, with a dwelling-house, was presented to Browne by his appreciative parishioners, and the bread thus cast upon the waters returned to the little congregation in true scriptural fashion, for when Arthur Browne removed to Portsmouth he presented the parish with the glebe and rectory for the "repairing and upholding the Church of England in Providence."

Until within a few years the old parsonage was still standing on the Swan Point Road, now alas! rechristened, Morris Avenue. It was a mile and a half from King's Church on the Towne Street, and its somewhat remote situation was selected for the greater convenience of the numerous church-members

living in Rehoboth, who were thus brought more nearly into contact with their church and its rector. Rehoboth, as a Massachusetts town, was under the domination of "The Standing Order" of Congregationalism, and many of its citizens who dissented from the established creed found solace in this neighborly shelter for spiritual refugees. The parsonage remained in the possession of the Society until 1794.

Mr. Browne's pastorate was marked by another enterprise of no little pith and moment. "A Church schoolmaster," George Taylor by name, and an Englishman, was, in 1735, given permission by the Colonial Assembly "to keep school in one of the chambers of the county house at Providence," under certain specified conditions, one of which was that "the glass of said house" should be kept "in constant good repair." It was left to the schoolmaster to decide whether this desirable consummation should be reached by means of a precautionary discipline, or by forced contributions in the event of actual damage. Mr. Taylor was also required to "erect a handsome sundial in the front of said house, both for ornament and use." In the absence of either town-clock or bell, no doubt the dial filled a long-felt want. We may easily imagine each urchin trudging home to his midday dinner, and pausing to note the creeping shadow, whose progress was so wonderfully slow at certain times of the day, and so astonishingly rapid at others.

The educational advantages to be obtained in the Providence of the "good old colony times" were chiefly conspicuous by their absence. Land for a school was, it is true, set aside in 1663, and formally designated as the "school house lot." But twenty years later, Jonathan Whipple, Junior, called the attention of the town-meeting to the fact that the land intended "for the use and Bennifitt of a Schoole" had not yet been "layd out."

Shortly after this, William Turpin, innkeeper, put in a "Humble request" wherein he styles himself "now schoolemaster of the Towne," and desires that "the aforesaid Land: May bee forthwith layd out . . . & that the said Master or his heires may bee invested in the said Land soe long as hee or any of them shall maintaine that worthy art of Learneing." Our knowledge of Turpin's qualifications to "Maintaine that worthy art" are limited to the conditions of a contract signed by him in 1684, whereby he engaged to furnish little Peregrine Gardner with board and schooling for one year, for the sum of six pounds. One half the year's expenses were paid in beef, pork, and corn, and one half in silver money. The boy's course of study was also stipulated. He was to be instructed in reading and writing, and if Mr. Turpin had the gift of imparting to his pupils his own beautifully clear handwriting, his "art" was surely worthy of perpetuation.

Turning from this circumscribed field of action,

OATH OF SAMUEL WINSOR, 1713

Regarding card-playing by William Turpin and Edward Hawkins. From the original document in the Moses Brown Papers, vol. 18, p. 69, in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

$$Z(\mathcal{A}) = \{x \in \mathcal{A} \mid x = x^2\}$$

Let  $\mathcal{A}$  be a finite-dimensional algebra over a field  $K$ . Then the center  $Z(\mathcal{A})$  of \mathcal{A} is a subalgebra of  $\mathcal{A}$  consisting of all elements  $x \in \mathcal{A}$  such that  $x = x^2$ . The center  $Z(\mathcal{A})$  is a commutative subalgebra of  $\mathcal{A}$ .



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Samuel Gifford aged thirty years  
at this Court witnesseth as followeth  
that he being at ye house of Mr. Thomas  
Tilson, yond time In January last past he  
then see' the aforesaid Chapman and Edward Chapman  
June. Playing at or with cards in the  
house near the middle of ye Day further to

Deponant saith not

taken upon Engagement this sixteenth day of February

1712.  
13

Before me Richard Grooms Justice of Peace



Turpin devoted himself to real estate with more marked success. The Turpin farm at the north end of the town included land on both sides of the river, while the Turpin Inn, on the Towne Street, was long a favorite centre for townsmen and councilmen, and a well-known stopping-place for travellers. Ten years slipped by after Turpin's petition in the interests of education, before the town finally granted "a small spot of land to sett a schoole house," near Dexter's Lane or Stompers Hill, provided that the lot was improved and the schoolhouse built "in some Considerable time." Turpin's name is among those of the eight substantial townsmen to whom this grant was made. So far as can be ascertained, its conditions had not been fulfilled at the time of his death, in 1709.

That public opinion in Providence would have pronounced the "worthy art of Learneing" to be among the luxuries rather than the necessities of life is well known. The neighboring town across the Seekonk made provision for a school as early as 1677. In 1725, John Comer records in his diary that he is engaged to teach school in Swansea, at a salary of forty-four pounds a year. George Taylor received from the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel ten pounds a year. Two years after his installation as schoolmaster he stated that he had twenty-three white and two black children under his care, whom he catechised on Wednesday and Saturday. The

intervening days were profitably passed in explaining the principles of religion, which they had learned by heart. Mr. Taylor was warden of King's Church and justice of the peace, as well as schoolmaster. An ancient silver paten, still belonging to the parish, was presented by him. It bears the inscription, "An Oblation of G. T. Schoolmaster for the Use of the Altar in the Church of England, at Providence, N. E., 1748."

Arthur Browne's successor, the Reverend John Checkley, was a man of varied and interesting attributes, who had proved himself a worthy soldier of the church militant long before he was enrolled among the leaders of its army. He was born in Boston, in 1680, and was a pupil at the Boston Latin School. His education was completed at Oxford, and he travelled in Europe sufficiently to enable him to collect books, manuscripts, and paintings. He is said to have been a man of extraordinary intellectual ability, and a keen and appreciative scholar. His conversational powers were especially extolled, both for the elegance and ease which marked his words, and for his racy humor and inexhaustible fund of anecdote. He was regarded as one of the wits of his time, and his *bons-mots* were current for a whole generation.

In 1717, he opened, in Boston, a variety store, known as the "Crown and Blue-Gate." This little shop speedily became a well-known literary and

TITLE-PAGE OF REV. JOHN CHECKLEY'S "MODEST  
PROOF," BOSTON, 1723.

From a copy in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

THESE ARE OF KAYE FOR 1750  
PROOF, H. 1750  
This is a copy in the H. 1750

*Stephen Smalljohn*

A *J. Thayer's*  
MODEST PROOF  
OF THE  
*Order & Government*

Settled by Christ and his Apostles  
IN THE  
CHURCH.

BY SHEWING

- I. What Sacred Offices were Instituted by them.
- II. How those Offices were Distinguished.
- III. That they were to be Perpetual and Standing in the Church And,
- IV. Who Succeed in them, and rightly Execute them to this Day.

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*Recommended as proper to be put into the Hands of the Laity*

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B O S T O N :

Re-printed by *Tho. Fleet*, and are to be Sold by *Benjamin Eliot* in *Boston*, *Daniel Auncult* in *Newport*, *Gabriel Bernon* in *Providence*, *Mr Gallop* in *Bristol*, *Mr. Jean* in *Stratford*, and in most other Towns within the Colonies of *Connecticut* and *Rhode-Island*. 1723.





social centre, and before many months had passed it was no secret that here strange doctrines as to the apostolic and divine origin of the episcopate were boldly and eloquently set forth by the proprietor. In 1719, the enterprising bookseller offered to the Boston public two pamphlets supporting his views. The Massachusetts authorities considered it time to act, and called on Checkley to take the oaths of allegiance and abjuration, since he rested under suspicion of disaffection to His Majesty's Government. Checkley indignantly refused. The matter came before the court, and he was forced to pay a fine of six pounds, and to find sureties for his good behavior until such time as he should be ready to take the required oaths. This was not until 1724. In the mean time Checkley had visited England, and it is believed that he offered himself as a candidate for Holy Orders. If so, his attitude in the matter of taking the oaths would, of course, have led to his unqualified rejection.

Nor had the godly and orthodox divines of Boston been idle. A hailstorm of confuting pamphlets appeared in answer to Checkley's attack, and these were, in due course, met by rejoinders, and reissues of the irritating cause of the disturbance. In one form or another the contest was waged without intermission during the next fourteen years, for it was not until 1738 that Checkley, after repeated rejection, was finally admitted to orders in the Church of England. A man of fifty-eight, he took up with enthusi-

asm a new career and a future whose promises were far from brilliant. He was immediately appointed missionary at Providence, on a salary of sixty pounds a year. For many reasons the appointment was eminently satisfactory. He would thus be within reach of his old home and his old friends at Boston, while in Mr. Honeyman, of Newport, and Doctor MacSparran, of Narragansett, he would have congenial fellow-workers as well as old and tried friends.

His new parishioners received him with "most unfeigned thanks," and he was soon deeply engaged in his work, far beyond the official limits of his task. He preached at Attleborough, at Warwick, and sometimes at Taunton. He worked enthusiastically and successfully among the Indians, and he acted, at different times, as tutor. His private library was much more extensive than that of the ordinary New-England minister, numbering nearly one thousand volumes; among these were many folios and quartos in Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, and other languages. His letters to the Venerable Society tell us of his work and the conditions under which he labored. In the first year of his ministry he baptized twenty-six persons, "visited almost all the Indians remaining in this part of the Country . . . and Built a Barn and Stable upon the Glebe," and this by borrowing money at twelve per cent. He laments the unavoidable outlay, as otherwise he "would lay out some Mony in England for Books against Atheism and

Infidelity: That Poison being widely diffused through this Country." He adds that the house and glebe are "not yet wholly paid for, nor all the windows of the Church quite mended that were broken by the dreadful Storm of Hail the last year."

This account of the somewhat forlorn conditions obtaining in his new field of work was written in the early November of 1740. It was not until two years later that the damage done by the "Storm of Hail" was completely repaired, and then under the influence of the religious zeal of a stranger. In the fall of 1742, Mr. Checkley judged it advisable to explain his attitude "respecting Mr. Gilbert Tennent." He affirms that "The Town of Providence was in an Uproar . . . running after Mr. Tennent, who prayed and then discoursed to the people, morning, noon and night." It was evident to Checkley that if he adopted a policy of silent contempt, he would probably lose a large proportion of his small congregation. He therefore wisely took the bull by the horns, and "publicly invited Mr. Tennent and his numerous Followers to come to Church . . . where I would perform Divine Service and preach a Sermon. They did accordingly come, a very numerous Assembly . . . from whom, after Divine Service, I had a Collection of Money which effectually mended our Church windows broken by the Hail, which we were not able to mend."

We may easily imagine the humorous twinkle of

the eye with which the good rector pocketed this spoil from the Egyptians. A bit of natural curiosity was his also. He proceeds to say that Mr. Tennent announced his intention to preach in King's Church in the afternoon. "I did not contradict it. For, the truth is, I had a great Desire to see what they would be at; that I might be the better able to oppose them," — an argument of justification by no means new, even in that day. He then describes the afternoon service, and concludes by saying that he had "a great Deal of private conversation" with Mr. Tennent, which he hopes "did him [Tennent] good." With the Evangelical revivalists, as such, Mr. Checkley had little sympathy. He says, in connection with his account of Tennent's visit to Providence, "no Minister in the Country hath opposed their mad proceedings more than I have done," and his description of the New Lights and their extravagances, in 1751, is that of a typical Church of England rector.

Checkley was none the less an eager laborer in the vineyard. He frequently preached at Taunton, twenty miles distant from his home, and at times went fifty miles, through snow and flood, to administer the sacraments. And this in the extraordinarily severe winter of 1740 and 1741, when Narragansett Bay was frozen solid, so that people drove from Newport to Providence, while the snow lay on the ground so late into the spring that hundreds of sheep starved,

and the fruit trees did not blossom until the middle of June.

That his work was arduous we know, and that the results were not always encouraging we may infer from his report for a half-year's labor respecting the "Converts from a profane disorderly and Unchristian course of life, to a life of Christian purity meekness and Charity." The number of the reclaimed was two. In 1742, a parochial Library was sent him by the Society, for which "most hearty Thanks" were rendered. Five years later he asks for "some Common Prayer Books with Brady & Tate's Psalms, . . . & some Silver-covered Primers for the Children, whose Parents are highly pleased by the distribution of such *fine* books."

In 1751 he writes in some perturbation of spirit: "No man can think (who is an utter stranger to them) what strange objections the People raise against the Sacraments; I mean such People as have been dragged up in Schism, or rather many of them, in no religion: the former (if possible) being Worse than the Latter. . . . The Infidels & the New-Lights rage most furiously against the Ordinances of Christ being necessary to Salvation. The Enthusiastic New-Lights affirming nothing necessary but what they wildly call Conversion. That is screaming and tumbling about on the Floor, young Men & Women ten or 12 promiscuously on the Floor at once . . . always screaming, and sometimes in a most hideous

manner, calling upon People *to come to Christ, come to Christ, come to Christ*. At the same Time declaring to the people that the Sacraments will not carry them to Christ, but only their being *converted* as they have been. After these distracted Frolicks, and many other, more like Demoniacs than any Thing else, they pretend to great Joy, and Serenity of Mind, and are then (according to their Scheme) . . . entirely *converted*, and are infallibly sure of Salvation.”

John Checkley died in harness in 1754. A daughter survived him. She had married Henry Paget of Providence, an Irishman and an active member of King’s Church, whom the good rector had tested in things temporal as well as things spiritual. Paget’s farm, just five miles north of King’s Church, in the town of Smithfield, was the joint purchase of himself and his father-in-law. The spacious hip-roofed house is still standing. Shortly before Paget’s death, in 1772, this landed estate became the property of the Arnold family.

At some time subsequent to the marriage of Mr. Checkley’s daughter the home centre seems to have alternated between the Parsonage and the Towne Street. At the corner of the present South Main and College Streets (approximately) was a lot of land, originally belonging to the home lot of Chad Brown. It was sold by Chad Brown’s descendants, and in 1746 it was owned by John Checkley, who not improbably paid many a pleasant visit to the house put

up there by his son-in-law, Henry Paget. Paget's next-door neighbor on the south was the widow of James Brown and the mother of the "Four Brothers," "John and Jo, Nick and Mo," who were, at the time of which we write, busily employed in mastering the three "R's." Across the street Mr. Checkley found congenial society in the person of Samuel Chace, a good Episcopalian, while on the other side of the lane which led up the hill (the predecessor of College Street), he had within reach sufficient variety of opinion to give a spice to the life of any man. On the corner of Presbyterian Lane and the Towne Street was Ephraim Bowen, a stanch Presbyterian, and adjoining Brother Bowen was the house of Daniel Jenckes, a very strong Baptist.

We must not, however, think of Mr. Checkley and the Pagets as dependent on the immediate neighbors for society. The man whose visits to the outlying heathen were only limited by his horse's powers of endurance, would surely often jog across Great Bridge to enjoy a chat with his friend Doctor Henry Sweeting, whose homestead, on the site now occupied by the firm of Barker & Chadsey, was the first house to be built on Weybosset Point. The Sweeting connection formed quite a colony. The Doctor's son and his two married daughters were presently established in homes close by the parent rooftree. Until within a few years, Dunwell's Gangway, now buried under the Banigan Building, perpetuated the memory of his son-in-law, John Dunwell.

Another congenial friend of the rector, and staunch supporter of King's Church, was John Merritt, an Englishman of ample means and scholarly tastes, who came to Providence, probably from Newport, in or near 1746. Mr. Merritt was possessed of many of the attributes of the "fine old English gentleman." He was prosperous, liberal, and kindly, a man of culture and experience, and yet withal a bit autocratic and hot-headed. His two-hundred-acre estate lay to the east of the present Arlington Avenue, and extended to the banks of the Seekonk. To a later generation it was well known as the "Moses Brown Farm." His land was well-farmed, having two barns, a large coach-house, a sheep-house, granary, gardens, and orchards. His negro servants were carefully housed. His business interests were not confined to Providence. He was concerned in an iron forge at Uxbridge, in Massachusetts, and there are still on file among the papers of Nicholas Brown and Company letters from Mr. Merritt dealing with orders and commissions to Boston and elsewhere.

He brought to Providence the first and for a long time the only coach in the town. We may imagine this ponderous equipage, with two (it may be four) well-groomed horses, and liveried coachman, wending its stately way through Arlington Avenue — then the Pawtucket Road — to Gaol Lane (now Meeting Street), which then ran some distance east of Hope Street — "the Highway." Gaol Lane was not, how-



ever, in any condition to serve as a carriage-road, and we may be sure the careful driver drew a breath of relief when they reached Olney's Lane, and his master's progress to the Towne Street was at last unimpeded by gates and bars. Once started on his travels in this imposing vehicle, Mr. Merritt must perforce have gone to the Parade (Market Square), for nowhere short of that point could the most experienced of "stagers" have found space to turn in the narrow highways of Providence. It was an eventful day for the good people of the town when Mr. Merritt called on Mr. Checkley and his lady, or on his successor, Mr. Graves. Not improbably the congregation at King's Church gained in numbers and general esteem after the appearance at the church door of his coach in all its splendor.

John Merritt was a liberal contributor to the church with which he identified himself. When he died, in 1770, "leaving the Integrity of his Heart and many exemplary Qualifications of his Life to be celebrated by others," it was found that he had left to "the Episcopal Church for its repair as to the members for the time being may seem best, £100," and also a lot of land adjoining the church property. To the rector he bequeathed "£30, and £30 worth of Books which he may chuse out of my Library according to the value in the Catalogue, with Rings to him and his Lady." The library was a really amazing collection of books in the Providence of that day,

for a man who was not a theologian. There were many volumes of English poetry and essays, some classics, Cæsar, Horace, Marcus Aurelius, and the plays of Sophocles, works on agriculture, dictionaries and gazetteers, and a creditable array of volumes dealing with theology. It is certain that, with the exception of John Checkley, no man in town had a library approaching that of Mr. Merritt, either in the number of books, or their quality.

A perusal of the inventory of Mr. Checkley's personal effects will throw light on his tastes and pursuits. We find a "Silver Snuff box with gilt crucifix &c.," and this — it is interesting to know — is still in the possession of his descendants. There were also a microscope and a telescope, ninety-two "pieces of paint, Grate & Small," and "One Gold Ring," set with diamonds. The personal property came to £2530. 5. 0, and there was real estate to the amount of £1101. 18. 9. Mr. Checkley was buried in the yard between King's Church and the street. When the new church — the present St. John's — was built in 1810, all the graves and gravestones in front of the church disappeared. Their disposition is not known. Many of the old gravestones were destroyed or carted away.

When, in 1722, Gabriel Bernon wrote to Mr. Honeyman concerning the future prospects of that church in which they both took so keen an interest, he mentioned, as "the three chief men of the town,"

Colonel Whipple, "Mr. Jink, our Lieutenant Governor," and "Judge Waterman, a man of very good parts," and if we exclude the name of Gabriel Bernon himself, the characterization may serve for the moment.

"Mr. Jink" is certainly entitled to the distinction accorded him. Joseph Jenckes was an interesting personage. His father — also Joseph — "planted Pawtucket," where he set up a forge and a saw-mill, and became a person of considerable wealth and importance. Joseph the younger distinguished himself in King Philip's War. Eventually he became the commander of the militia on the mainland, with the title of "Major for the Main." He is portrayed for us as "of a large stature (seven feet and two inches in height), and well-proportioned" with a "most grave and commanding countenance." In 1722 he had just returned from a journey to England, whither he was sent by the Rhode-Islanders to state the case for the colony in the matter of a disputed land claim with Connecticut. The boundaries of Rhode Island colony were in a state of chronic readjustment until a much later period than this.

Jenckes's eloquence and power of argument were matters of more than local celebrity. He was foremost among the members of the Baptist church, and Bernon especially mentions him as an illustrative instance of "many worthy gentlemen that make their application to read the Holy scriptures and are very

well able to give an account of their faith." These talents found full scope for action a few years later, when the innovating doctrines set forth by a newcomer among the Baptist brethren in Providence caused prolonged search for scriptural warrant, and eloquent exposition founded on the results thereof, for and against such weighty matters as "the laying on of hands," the use of music in church service, and the payment of a salary to the officiating elder, or minister, of the congregation. Joseph Jenckes's letters may still be read, and they are well worth the perusal for the sake of the pen-and-ink portrait they present of the clear-headed, tolerant, and generous writer.

During the greater part of his long and active life Jenckes was employed in the colony's political service. In 1691, he was chosen deputy, and in 1708, assistant. At various times from 1715 to 1727 he held the office of deputy governor, and that of governor from 1727 to 1732. We are told that he was "solicited to serve the colony longer as their Governor, but with heartfelt appreciation he told them that he felt his natural faculties abating, and that if he should hold office a few years longer he might not be sensible of their decay, and perhaps should not be willing to resign."

Governor Jenckes was the first governor of the colony who was not an inhabitant of Newport. It well illustrates the comparative importance of Newport and Providence that in the first session after his

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election the Assembly resolved, that it was "highly necessary for the Governor of this colony to live at Newport"; and in view of the fact that the removal thither from Pawtucket would be "very chargeable," an appropriation of one hundred pounds from the colony treasury was set apart "to defray the charges of removing his family to Newport." He lived to the ripe age of eighty-four years. On his tomb in the North Burial Ground he is described as "a zealous Christian, a Wise and Prudent Governor, a Kind Husband and a Tender Father, a good Neighbor, and a Faithful Friend, Grave, Sober, Pleasant in Behavior, Beautiful in Person, with a soul truly Great, Heroic and Sweetly Tempered."

The estimable "Mr. Jinks" was, however, but one in the list of "learned men" whom Gabriel Bernon enumerates in his letter, in order duly to impress on the mind of his correspondent the necessity for sending to the parish at Providence a "learned . . . minister of good erudition," by preference "an Old England gentleman minister." His list includes, among others, Jonathan Sprague, a man of some prominence in the political life of the colony, but better known as a Baptist preacher, or exhorter. In that capacity he addressed an extremely forcible epistle to three Congregational divines of the Massachusetts colony, who, in 1721, presumed to suggest to Sprague and others the advisability of establishing a Congregational church in Providence.

Another name is that of Samuel Winsor, the grandson of Roger Williams, whose career as pastor of the Baptist church has been already noted. "Mr. Outram, mathematician," has been identified by Mr. Henry R. Chace with William Antrim, whose name, writes Mr. Chace, "was spelled by the people of Providence, in both the first and second syllables, in all the ways possible by use of the various vowels." He and his wife Sarah (she that was a Fenner) were long involved in a contest with Mrs. Antrim's brothers over the settlement of her father's estate. From this wordy war the Antrims finally emerged with a sufficient supply of ready money to enable them to buy a warehouse lot on the corner of what is now North Main and Smith Streets, and here Antrim built a distillery, carried on a thriving business, laid up money, invested in real estate, and prospered, until his death, in 1754. Antrim was a near neighbor of Gabriel Bernon, and a congenial member of that interesting group of newcomers who enliven the annals of Providence in the early eighteenth century.

To the north of Bernon and Antrim lived Jonathan Sprague and Captain John Crawford. Across the way was "Nathaniel Brown of Kittle Point," who appears to have made Providence his home at a somewhat later date than his neighbors just mentioned. In 1713, he bought the home lot which had originally belonged to Richard Scott. He was living at Rehoboth in 1725, when, although a warden of

LETTER FROM REV. JAMES MCSPARRAN TO GABRIEL  
BERNON, JULY 2, 1721

From original document in Bernon Papers, in the Rhode  
Island Historical Society.

From October 1964 to March 1965, the following 1000 specimens of *Chironomus tentaculatus* were collected from the following locations:







King's Church, he was imprisoned at Bristol (then in Massachusetts) "for refusing to pay towards the Support of the Dissenting teacher in that Town," since his conscience forbade him "to contribute towards the Supporting Schism." At some time between the date of that untoward event and the time of his marriage with Mary, the widow of Gabriel Bernon, in 1737, we may take for granted that he became a resident of Providence. His daughter married Doctor Henry Sweeting, already referred to as of the elect who were ministered to by the excellent and reverend John Checkley.

When Nathaniel Brown died, in 1738, he divided his large landed estate. His grandson, Job Sweeting, received land on the west side of the Great Salt River. To his son Nathaniel — who was, by the way, a far from promising branch of the parent tree — were given the two lots on the Towne Street. The greater part of the property lay without the bounds of the Rhode Island of that day, across the Seekonk, where now the unsightly town of East Providence perpetuates the old shipbuilder's Watchemoket Farm in its wind-swept Watchemoket Square. These goodly acres of farming-land were bequeathed to his son John.

Nathaniel Brown's neighbor and fellow-churchman, Gabriel Bernon, lived to the advanced age of ninety-two years. He was buried beneath King's Church, and on the walls of the present building —

St. John's—a bronze tablet records his many virtues. An obituary notice, published in a Boston paper of that period, speaks of him as follows: "He was courteous, honest and kind, and died in great faith and hope in his Redeemer, and assurance of salvation; and has left a good name among his acquaintances. . . . He was decently buried under the Episcopal church at Providence, and a great concourse of people attended his funeral, to whom the Rev. Mr. Brown preached an agreeable and eloquent sermon from Psalms xxxix, 4." The man himself is elsewhere described as of "commanding appearance and courtly bearing. Tall, slender, and erect, he joined the vivacity of his race with the thoughtfulness that marked the men of his creed. Genuine kindness consisted with a quick temper, which betrayed itself in a certain imperiousness of manner."

His house, on the Towne Street of Providence, was built on the model of those of his boyhood's home, with a bold projecting front. It was of wood, two stories on the street, and three in the rear. The two daughters of his marriage with Mary Harris, of Providence, married, in their turn, Joseph and Gideon Crawford, the sons of Major William. These two brothers were leading citizens and prominent merchants of the Providence of their generation, where they lived, honored and respected, until the closing years of the eighteenth century.

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When Gabriel Bernon died, in 1736, he left a personal estate valued at £896. He owned four negro slaves, who were appraised at £500. Among his more important effects were forty-four ounces of plate, and two pairs of large gold buttons, a tea-table, six large maps, a silver-hilted sword, and a silver-handled cane.



## Chapter VI

### PROGRESS, ECCLESIASTICAL AND SECULAR

THE unsatisfactory social and religious conditions of the Providence of the early eighteenth century led Gabriel Bernon, Nathaniel Brown, Colonel Joseph Whipple, and others, to bestir themselves to bring about a change for the better. We have watched as their efforts led to the establishment of King's Church.

At practically the same time certain other good people, living in Massachusetts and Connecticut, were displaying a creditable zeal in the endeavor to raise an Ebenezer for the comfort of the elect.

It was in 1721 that the first efforts to establish the "Congregational or Presbyterian way" of worship were set on foot in the town of Providence. In the October of that year three prominent ministers of the Massachusetts colony endeavored to feel the pulse of public opinion by addressing to Captain Nicholas Power and others a letter on the subject. These worthy representatives of "the standing order" asked to be informed "whether the preaching of our ministers in Providence might not be acceptable; and whether some who do not greatly incline to frequent any pious meeting in the place, might not be drawn to . . . hear our ministers, and so might be won

over . . . into serious godliness." The inducement thus tactfully set forth was followed by a suggestion that "if . . . a small meeting house should be built in your town to entertain such as are willing to hear our ministers, we should account it a great favor, if you all . . . or any of you, would please to build pews therein."

The proposition proved to be far from acceptable to the men for whose perusal it was written. One of their number—namely, Elder Jonathan Sprague, whose claims to intellectual leadership have been already touched on—indited a reply intended to repress this budding fervor of the missionary spirit, while at the same time he set forth in uncompromising language the Baptist point of view. Nor did the eloquent exhorter fail to dwell on the wrongs and sufferings, past and present, of those "dear friends and pious dissenters," in Attleborough, Mendon, and other towns, whose persons had been cast into prison and their estates seized to maintain "the standing order." "For the future," says Sprague grimly, "never let us hear of your pillaging conscientious dissenters to maintain your own ministers."

This exhortation was penned in February, 1722. In the following June, Gabriel Bernon, writing to the Reverend James Honeyman, urges the Episcopalians to prompt action, for he says, the "Ministers and Presbytery of the government of Boston and Connecticut" are "very busy to promote and advance

their cause" in Providence. The active agent in promoting this same cause was Doctor John Hoyle, described in contemporary documents as a "Practitioner in Physick." He appears to have been an inn-keeper as well, while his transactions in real estate were by no means inconsiderable. Some five or six years before this time he had applied to the Town Council of Providence for license to keep an inn, but for some unknown reason his request was refused. Religious bias was not often a factor in Providence politics, and we can hardly suppose that Hoyle's dissent from the cardinal points of the Baptist doctrine would determine the matter at issue.

At all events, he was well known and trusted by his friends in Massachusetts and Connecticut, and by his exertions among these liberal-minded people £24 was collected "in the way of charity and bounty for the erecting of a meeting-house and the purchase of a piece of land . . . said meeting house . . . to be appointed to the use of the Godley preachers and ministers and assemblies that shall peaceably and orderly worship in the Congregational or Presbyterian way."

Having obtained the money, Hoyle bought a lot on the West Side of the Great Salt River, at about the junction of the present Broad and Weybosset Streets. The West Side of that day was in very nearly the same condition as when Roger Williams named the town of Providence. A road ran from the



Wading Place through what is now Exchange Street, past the Turk's Head and along the line of Weybosset Street. This was the Old Country Road. It diverged where Broad Street now begins, and led to Pawtuxet on the left, and to Plainfield on the right. Northwest of the Country Road lay Waterman's Salt Marsh, extending from Turk's Head to the present Eddy Street. It was perhaps two hundred feet wide at the eastern end, and spread out to some four hundred feet at the western extremity. Beyond the marsh lay the Mathewson Farm, where was probably the only dwelling-house in that part of the city when Hoyle, in 1722, bought one acre of land of Zachariah Mathewson, at the corner where the Pawtuxet and Plainfield roads diverged.

The selection of such a situation, on the edge of the wilderness, for the new meeting-house can be explained by the fact that by far the greater part of the prospective parishioners were absentees, living in Rehoboth and Johnston, or well out on the road to Pawtuxet.

A building was begun, but long ere it approached completion, the purchasers decided to abandon the lot of their first choice in favor of a more thickly settled neighborhood, and the structure was accordingly pulled down. We are told that Doctor Hoyle felt the removal very bitterly. Finally a compromise was reached, and the Doctor made over to the infant society in return for the twenty-four pounds which he

had collected, that acre of land on which he had begun the unfinished meeting-house. The unfortunate Hoyle has been depicted for posterity as one who unloaded his own bad bargain on the little church whose cause he had been ostensibly laboring to promote. It is possible that scant justice has been done him. His acre of land, at the junction of two highways, may well have seemed worth the price. When the Society finally obtained from Daniel Abbott a rear lot on the side hill above the Towne Street it cost them thirty pounds. Daniel Abbott was the son of our old acquaintance of that name who played so prominent a part as town-clerk in the years immediately following King Philip's War, and was also owner of the distil-house by the Parade, just in front of the Great Bridge.

In 1723, Daniel Abbott and his wife Mary deeded to the Congregational ministers of Medfield, Bristol, and Rehoboth, and to the eldest deacon in each of those churches, as trustees, a portion of the Chad Brown home lot on the Towne Street, beginning "twelve poles eastward from the said Street . . . for the erecting and building a meeting house."

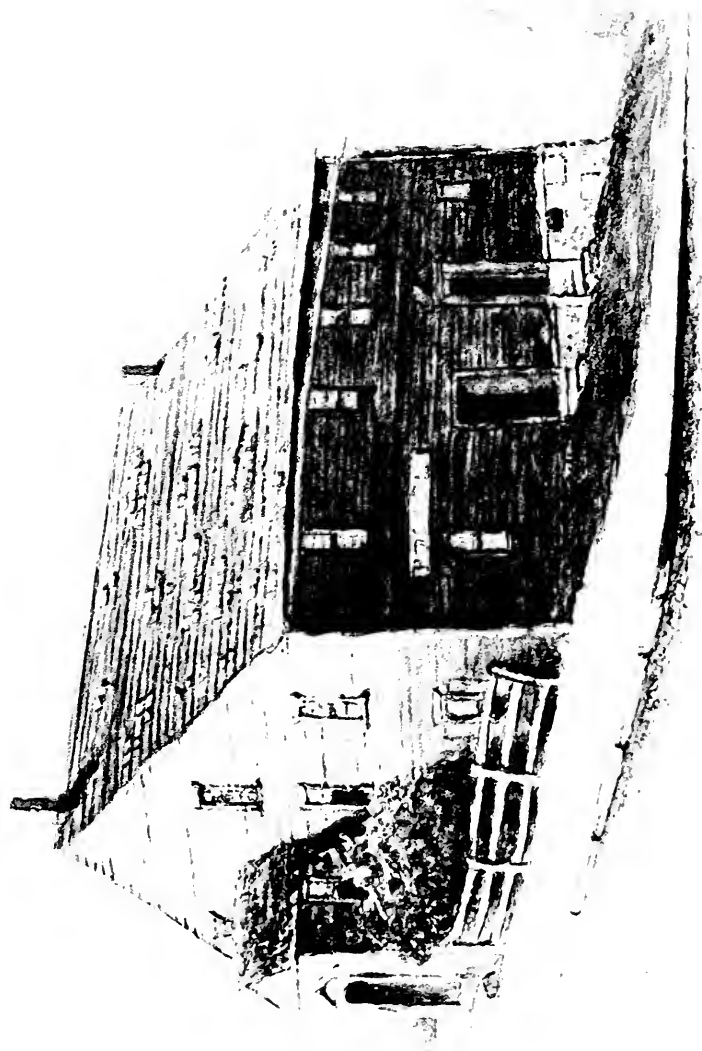
This lot was part of that whereon now stands the Providence County Court-House, at the corner of Benefit and College Streets. The purchase money, thirty pounds, was supplied by the "Reverend Nathaniel Cotton of Massachusetts Bay of his own free bounty for the setting up the worship of God in the

#### FIRST CONGREGATIONAL MEETING-HOUSE

Corner Benefit and College Streets, built 1723, used as the Town House and as a police court after 1795, and demolished 1860. From a water-color sketch by Edward L. Peckham, made in 1860, in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

# First Continental Congress

Constitutional Convention and College of William and Mary  
the House of Representatives and the Senate  
modified 1787. From a watercolor by Edward  
Theobald, made in 1860 in the Rhode Island  
Library.





Presbyterian or Congregational way in the town of Providence." The next step in order was "the erecting and building a meeting house." Progress was slow. In April of the next year (1724), the watchful Bernon reported that the "busy and urgent Presbyterian ministers get but little ground." In 1725 occurred another illustration of the missionary spirit abroad in Massachusetts, which was stimulating the good people of Providence in a most practical way by providing the necessary motive power to turn the wheels of their new religious organization. Another representative of the Cotton family came forward — the Reverend Thomas, of London — who gave "£50. towards the settlement of religion in the town of Providence, Rhode Island. £30. towards finishing the meeting house . . . and £20. towards the support of preaching there for the next four years to come." Thus encouraged, the little band of worshippers prevailed on Samuel Moody, "a worthy, plain and powerful minister of Jesus Christ" to watch over their spiritual welfare.

It was not until three years later, however, that the first pastor was settled over the little flock. This was Josiah Cotton, a brother of one of the trustees. He was a graduate of Harvard, of the class of 1722, and passed from the vocation of theological student to that of pedagogue, as did most aspirants to the ministry of that day and generation. Josiah Cotton taught school at Rehoboth for a salary of £45. per

annum. The Congregational church at Providence was his first parish, and there his ordination was impressively celebrated, on October 23, 1728. The service was followed by "a very Sumptuous Dinner" at the house of Captain Daniel Abbott. There were enrolled nine male members of the church, besides the young minister himself.

The Providence public was quick to recognize the presence of this outpouring of the spirit. The thoroughfare now known as College Street first came into existence in 1720, under the name of Rosemary Lane. When, however, the atmosphere became charged with theology, this dainty cognomen was discarded in favor of the more distinctive Presbyterian Lane, and a strait and narrow path to salvation it must have proved, its recorded width being but twenty feet.

During the next fifteen years the little group of worshippers in the "Congregational or Presbyterian way" enjoyed spiritual peace and prosperity. In 1742, however, their harmony of fellowship was rudely broken. In that year the outburst of religious excitement first set in motion at Northampton, and stimulated by the preaching of Tennent and Whitefield until it swept over New England, began to awaken fervor and enthusiasm in towns where torpor and indifference had long prevailed. The extravagant demonstrations of the "New Lights" a few years later have been already described for us by the



Reverend John Checkley. Josiah Cotton's parish was shaken to its foundations by this newly awakened zeal. A large part, if not a majority, of the members of his flock accused their devoted pastor of unsound theology, of preaching a doctrine of "damnable good works."

The poor man's cup was indeed full, as we learn from his pious if somewhat narrow-minded brother-minister, the Reverend Eleazer Wheelock, who visited Providence in the fall of 1741, on his way to Boston. His diary has preserved for us his impressions and comments. On reaching Scituate he visited "Capt. Angill" [an ancestor of President James B. Angell, of the University of Michigan] and preached there. He then paid a visit to one "Elder Fish in hope to find him a Servant of Christ; but found him a bigoted ignorant Baptist who seemed to know nothing as he ought to know." After thus unconsciously bearing testimony as to his own qualifications as a minister of the gospel of charity, the good Wheelock set forth for Providence. Two miles from town he was met by Ebenezer Knight, a thriving shopkeeper of the West Side, whose pretensions to gentility cannot be doubted, since Mr. Wheelock explicitly states that he "rode with Mr. Knight into Town in his Calashe. Preached 3 Sermons," he continues, and exclaims with reason, "O what a burden dear Mr. Cotton has daily to bear." After two days of preaching, conference, and exhortation,

somewhat disturbed by the "many scoffers," the visitor departed, accompanied so far as "Swansey" by his friends "Mr. Cotton and Madam," and again privileged to occupy a "calashe," — that of Mr. Cotton.

In the spring of 1743, the discontented faction formally withdrew from the church, and, in the language of the record, "they set up a separate meeting, where they attended to the exhortations of a lay brother, who had been brought up in the business of house-carpentry." This interesting personage was Joseph Snow, Junior. His father, a blacksmith by trade, had come to Providence in 1730, from Easton, Massachusetts, and was holding the office of deacon in Mr. Cotton's church at the time of the secession. Deacon Snow, his son, and his son-in-law were among the first settlers on the West Side of the Great River. They broke ground near the place where the Beneficent Church now stands, on Weybosset Street.

The West Side was not an attractive neighborhood in those early days. Little change had taken place in the twenty years since Doctor Hoyle's abortive attempt to establish a religious centre in this neighborhood. Timothy Carpenter had built his house on the northeast corner of the lot on which the old post-office stands, and near by, on Weybosset Point, Doctor Henry Sweeting had built and settled. Deacon Snow obtained some land in the neighborhood

where "Mr. Snow's Meeting House" was eventually to stand, through the good offices of Captain John Field, whose daughter he had married. A year or two later he purchased a tract of land of about four acres, extending from the house of Captain John Field, on the corner of the present Clifford and Chestnut Streets, to the house of Zachariah Mathewson at the corner of Eddy and Broad Streets, and lying south of the Country Road. Here the enterprising deacon built a house for himself and one for his son, a carpenter by trade. These they soon sold, laid out a new batch of house lots, built and sold again, and succeeded in creating a veritable real-estate boom.

The deacon has been tersely and caustically characterized as a "cantankerous person whose specialty was in stirring up church rows." Once in Providence, he appears to have found full scope for his peculiar talents, and in due course his activity met its reward. Eventually the Seceders formed themselves into a new church, with Joseph Snow, Junior, as pastor. The first requisite was a meeting-house. With a wisdom in no way savoring of fanaticism the newly appointed minister induced his congregation to build their meeting-house on the West Side of the river, close to the recently settled neighborhood of which his own and his father's homes formed the nucleus. A lot of land was given for this purpose by Daniel Abbott, and the necessary material was garnered

under the directing eye of the pastor himself, who "led some of his principal members into the woods and there cut down and hewed timber for that purpose." The open space on the east of the new building was long and appropriately known as Abbott's Parade, while the edifice itself was variously designated as "the Tennent Meeting House," the "New Light meeting house," and finally, as the individuality of its minister predominated all merely extraneous influences, as "Mr. Snow's Meeting-House." Its successor of to-day is styled the Beneficent Church, from the title of the Society, adopted in 1785, or is familiarly spoken of as the "Round-Top Church," because of its dome.

It was not until 1750 that the building was ready for service. The original meeting-house measured forty feet by thirty-six. It was several times enlarged, and in the early seventies was in constant demand for public gatherings, as having the largest audience-room in the town.

Mr. Snow carried into the ministry the activity which had distinguished him in secular pursuits. He was not a well-educated man, but he had the gift of eloquence, a command of Bible phraseology, and a voice of great volume. It was a popular saying that the Sabbath-breaking ne'er-do-weels, fishing off Weybosset Bridge, could easily hear and profit by Mr. Snow's exhortations to lead a better life, as he preached his Sunday sermon.

Notwithstanding Mr. Snow's untiring efforts for the regeneration of his fellow-townsmen, he by no means lost his interest in temporal concerns. He improved and built up the West Side of the town with an ardor akin to that wherewith he toiled in his Master's vineyard. In 1749, he and two other long-headed business men purchased of the widow Mathewson a considerable tract of land lying west of the present Mathewson Street, and north of Broad. The next move was to open a highway through this land, from what is now Cathedral Square to Waterman's Marsh, and then through the marsh to Turk's Head, where it met the Plainfield Road. These enterprising dealers in real estate laid out lots and built houses along their new road. These were taken up by newcomers, and before many years had gone by a thriving little settlement of tradesmen and artisans was to be found, and a notable addition was made, in due course of time, to the numbers of Mr. Snow's congregation.

While the new church thus prospered under the combined effects of the religious and secular enthusiasm of its members, the parent society drooped and pined. Its pastor was evidently not the man to infuse new vigor into the lives and works of the saving remnant of his congregation which was left him. After a few years of conscientious service he resigned his charge. It was not until 1751 that the load which he had laid down was finally adjusted to an-

other pair of shoulders. In that year the Reverend John Bass, who had been cast without the pale of Connecticut Congregationalism, became the leader of this struggling little flock. Bass was a graduate of Harvard. At the age of twenty-five he had been settled as minister over the church at Ashford, in Windham County, Connecticut. While yet a candidate his orthodoxy fell under suspicion, but further inquiry seemed to prove his principles to be sound. Later, his sermons were criticised as being insufficiently Calvinistic. His church went so far as to ask that the matter be referred to a conference. To this Bass refused his consent, saying that "as the people generally were in a ruffle, 't was best to defer calling them together until they were cooler, . . . and so fitter for action."

This answer did not tend to bring about the desired consummation. The conference was summoned, and Bass was accused of "falling away from the saving doctrine of original sin, wherefore neither his preaching nor his principles were good." On being asked, "Don't you think that a child brings Sin enough into the world with it to damn it forever?" Bass replied, "*He did not.*" The matter was settled then and there, for the doctrine of original sin was promptly pronounced "an essential condition of church fellowship and communion," and further discussion and elucidation failed to shake the convictions of either party. Bass removed to Providence, — the inevitable refuge

of the theologically unsound, — and there supplied the pulpit and such other spiritual offices as lay within the power of one who had not been ordained, “till about the year 1758, when by reason of an ill state of health, and the small encouragement he met with, as to support and numbers of hearers, he gave up the business, and entered upon the practice of Physic.” The encouragement was small, indeed, for we read that his congregations did not often exceed twenty, and that the church was “so scattered and divided, that it was scarcely known whether there were any of them left.”

The “practice of Physic” was not the only field of enterprise which engaged Mr. Bass’s attention. It is evident at a glance that such financial support as he could receive from the faithful few to whom he ministered must have been sadly insufficient to furnish the comforts of life. It was a necessity for the new minister to obtain a supplementary revenue from some source, if he would not starve. When, therefore, in 1752, shortly after his arrival in Providence, the opportunity offered to go into partnership with Deacon Snow of the dissenting party, and Samuel Nightingale, a pillar of the Presbyterian Society, for the purpose of carrying on the new distillery, built by Nightingale, Mr. Bass was not slow to invest his funds in this profitable enterprise. The establishment was known as the “Concord Distil-House” and stood on what is now Page Street, about one hundred

feet south of the Country Road. Both Mr. Bass and his partners were sufficiently broad-minded to be able to overlook differences of theological opinion on the six working-days of the week, and to content themselves with combating error, from the vantage-ground of pulpit and prayer-meeting, on the seventh. Although far from seeing eye to eye on points of doctrine, we may assume a practical harmony regarding their spirituous concerns.

At about the time the Concord Distil-House was built, a wide ditch was constructed, leading from Muddy Dock — where Dorrance Street is now — to the distil-house. By means of this improvement wood and barrels were transported on scows to and from the distillery and the Towne Street.

Even before John Bass gave up the cure of souls for the more immediately profitable cure of bodies, he seems to have resided on the West Side of the river. He occupied a house on the Plainfield Road, a little east of Mr. Snow's Meeting-House, and comparatively near the scene of his own financial interests. At a later date this house was the home of Doctor Samuel Carew, who not only dispensed pills and practised physic at his sign of the pestle and mortar, but kept a tavern known as "The Travelers," and ran a livery-stable as well.

We have no definite information respecting Mr. Bass's record as a doctor of medicine. His obituary notice, in the *Gazette* of 1762, speaks of "his public



Performances" as "evangelical, learned, rational and accurate," while in private life he was said to be "sociable, beneficent, compassionate, instructive, and exemplary," — a list of Christian virtues to be envied in any age.

Side by side with the development of these new religious societies whose beginnings have been traced, there is to be observed an expansion in the field of action of the pioneers in the spiritual life of Rhode Island, namely, the Baptists and the Quakers. The colony of Rhode Island had since the days of George Fox been a veritable stronghold of the Society of Friends, and here as elsewhere their habitual thrift and industry soon enabled them to become powerful factors in the political and industrial life of the community where they had first appeared as refugees.

The religious enthusiasm of the early years of the eighteenth century, and the zeal for missionary effort that followed it, seem to have aroused the placid Friends to fresh exertions. They, too, proceeded to build a meeting-house without further loss of time. Daniel Abbott, who appears to have been particularly active in furthering the erection of ecclesiastical edifices, offered a frame for the building. This was inspected and approved, and the quarterly meeting of June, 1725, having come to the conclusion "that it is most likely for the advancement of truth, to build a meeting-house in the town of Providence," agreed to raise one hundred pounds for that purpose. Mat-

ters progressed smoothly after this, and before 1727 the Friends' Meeting-House occupied its present position on Meeting Street, then known as Gaol Lane. Its erection helped to rouse the still small voice of conscience throughout the neighborhood to fresh exertions. The Society gained steadily in numbers and influence. In 1753, Doctor MacSparan, writing of the conditions prevailing in the colony, speaks of the Quakers as, "for the most part, the people in power," and the uncompromising divine unequivocally classes these sectaries among the "Briars, and Thorns, and noxious weeds" that were "all to be eradicated," before the pure doctrine of the Church of England could be successfully implanted in the unpromising field of labor presented to him for cultivation. Time was to prove, however, that there was room and to spare for all at seedtime, and that all should share the harvest.

Among the Baptists also the desire "to fight the good fight" found concrete expression in the form of a new meeting-house. Since the days of good old Pardon Tillinghast, the "hay-cap-like" building on the Towne Street had served the little band of worshippers in "the Baptist way." Within its smoke-grimed walls Elder Jonathan Sprague had edified many a congregation by the rigor of his orthodoxy, and the eloquence of Lieutenant-Governor Joseph Jenckes had been effectively exerted to uphold the cause of truth. The house was, however, neither

sightly nor commodious, and we cannot wonder that the swelling tide of improvement finally swept away the old building.

The new meeting-house stood on the adjoining lot on the Towne Street. It was begun on May 30, 1726, as is abundantly testified by the account-book of Justice Richard Brown, wherein is noted the dinner provided "for the people that raised the Baptist meeting-house in Providence (it being raised this day)." These lusty coadjutors in the good work were regaled with "One fat sheep which weighed 43 lbs. the quarter," and cost fourteen shillings and fourpence. Eight shillings were paid to the cook who was responsible for serving this formidable roast. For side dishes there were "two loaves of bread, which weighed 15 lbs.," half a peck of peas, and one pound of butter. A meal to be commended for the substantiality and sobriety of its viands!

The new meeting-house was about forty feet square, so we are told by John Howland, one of the best-known and most respected of the townspeople of the early nineteenth century. He says: "At high water the tide flowed nearly up to the west end of the building. There were no pews." Benches were placed on either side of the centre aisle. "The elders nearest the place usually preached. The elders were generally farmers, and had no salary or any other means of support but their own labor. They officiated in any place where there was a gathering, and

the people did not know who was to speak until they saw one begin. They did not approve of singing and never practiced it in public worship. When more than one elder was present, and the first had exhausted himself, he would say, 'there is time and space left if any one has further to offer.' In that case another and another would offer what he had to say; so there was no set time for closing the meeting. As elder Winsor's home was in Providence, he generally appeared in his place on Sunday [this was some thirty-five years after the day of Elder Jonathan Sprague], so that this came to be called elder Winsor's meeting. The house could not contain a large congregation, nor did the number present seem to require a larger house, as they were not crowded, though many of them came in from the neighboring towns on horseback, with women behind them on pillions."

A community of less than four thousand souls, wherein were erected during a single decade four meeting-houses, is surely entitled to be described as enterprising. It is true that these centres of social and religious life, both new and old, were not enthusiastically supported by the population as a whole. Outside aid was continually forthcoming, down to the time of the Revolution, and the clouds of darkness on the horizon were ever threatening to overcome the feeble beams of the candle on the altar.

In other fields of enterprise, however, the towns-

## MAP OF RHODE ISLAND

Surveyed by James Helme and William Chandler, 1741,  
from the manuscript map in the Rhode Island Historical  
Society. The portion reproduced shows Providence  
County.









people prospered, and the town grew in numbers and in wealth. From a recorded population of 1446, in 1708, the numbers had swelled to 3916, in 1730. From this time to the Revolutionary period there seems to have been little change. If some outsiders came to the town, on the other hand a goodly proportion of the townspeople went afield in search of home and fortune elsewhere.

Progress during these years of transformation showed itself in purely secular forms, as well as in efforts to further the spiritual welfare of those concerned. By June, 1729, population had so increased that "the more remote inhabitants" from such centres of activity as existed were "put to great trouble and difficulty, in prosecuting their affairs in the common course of justice."

It was to mitigate this hardship that the colony was "divided into three distinct and separate counties," namely, — Newport, King's, and Providence; in each of which was to be "forthwith erected . . . one County House, and one County Goal . . . meet and convenient for the holding of Courts & Security of Prisoners." Furthermore, the charge was to be "defrayed and Paid" by the colonial treasury. The civic pride of the good people of Providence was stimulated to immediate action. A town-meeting was convened without delay for the purpose of considering "Whether there should be any money allowed out of our Town Treasury to Add If need be

to what will be Allowed out of the General Treasury for the building of the County Court house, so that the said house might be made so large as to be serviceable for the Townes Publick use." The demands made by the servants of the public were not exorbitant. Their needs were satisfied with a building "fourty foot Long and thirty foot wide and Eightene foot stud betwixt Joynts," with "a Chimny or two . . . from the Chamber flower and upwards." This spacious public edifice was to be forthcoming, "Provided it be sett in the Place agreed on." The stipulated agreement was not reached, however, until after three months of argument and discussion, when it was "determined by voate" that the new court-house "should be sett . . . at Mr. William Page's," on the present Meeting Street a little west of Benefit.

In spite of the efforts of the party of opposition, — who foresaw disastrous results from the fact that the William Page land was entailed "unto William Olney," and duly set forth their objections in a petition bearing some ninety-odd signatures, — the majority had their way, and the house was "set up." More than twenty years later, Olney was given "Liberty to Dock said Entail," in order that a clear deed of title might be obtained.

It was expected that the new building would be available for business purposes by the spring of 1731, and the April town-meeting was summoned to meet

there. But the inherent inability of carpenters and contractors to finish a job on time had evidently not been reckoned with, for we read that "for Reason of it being Cluttered with the workmen being In the finishing of it; the Town haveing Liberty, meet in the Quakers meeting house . . . Close by." It was not until the following January that the town-meeting was enabled to enjoy the new accommodations on Gaol Lane, so called in recognition of the presence of the gaol, which stood conveniently at hand for the ministrations of judge and jury.

Courts and town-meetings by no means exhausted the resources of the new edifice. It had long ceased to be a novelty, however, when the day came on which it was suggested by Stephen Hopkins that the new Providence Library might well be accommodated with house-room within the precincts dedicated to law and order.

When, in 1742, Stephen Hopkins left his boyhood's home in the frontier town of Scituate, and removed himself and his family to Providence, he was already a man of note in the business circles of his new home. He had interests in the commerce both of Newport and of Providence, and was remarked by all who knew him as a young man of ability and probity, — one who was born to be a leader of men. His well-known house stood at the foot of the thoroughfare known to us as Hopkins Street. When his unpretentious home was built, there was, so far as we now

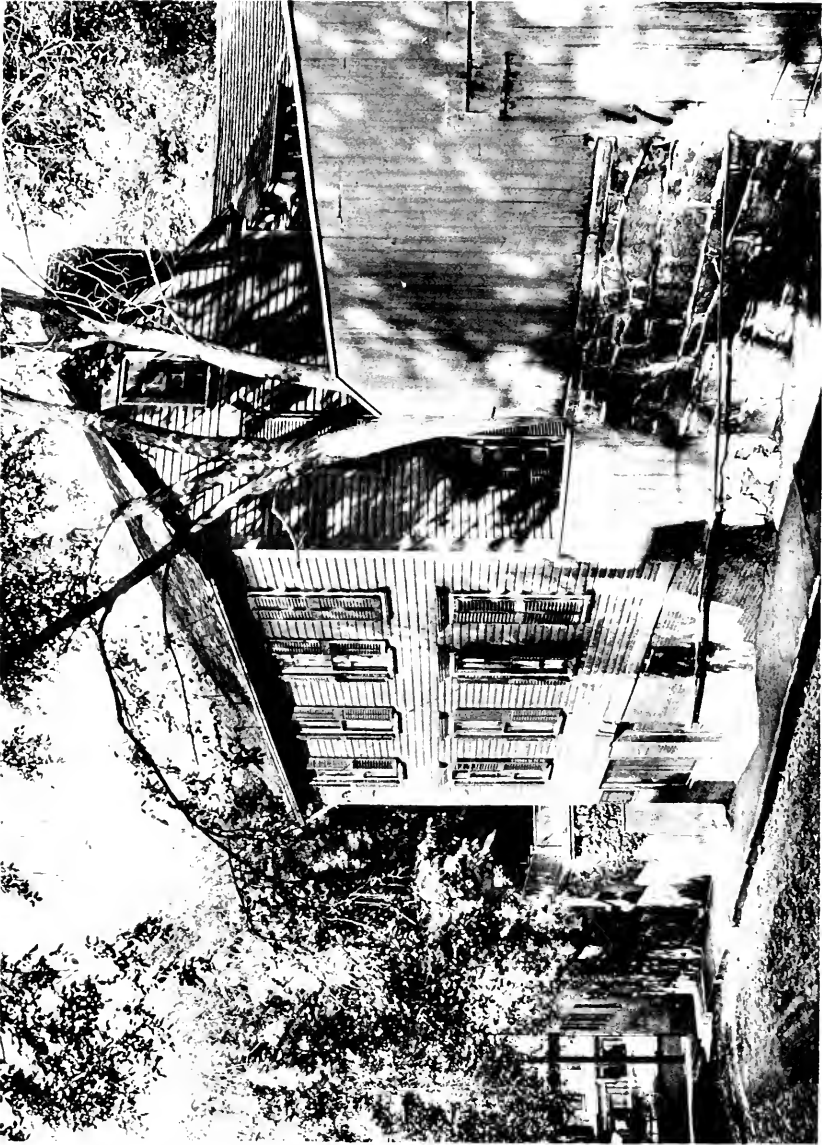
know, no more formal highway leading up the hill than a well-worn footpath. Ten years later a "new way" was ordered to be laid out, but we do not hear of it being honorably christened before 1791, when it became Bank Lane, in honor of the new bank situated thereupon. Since 1805 it has been Hopkins Street. The old house of Governor Hopkins — removed to the rear of its first site, on the Towne Street — still bears witness to the modest and unpretending scale of official etiquette which obtained in the days "when we lived under the king."

With the long tale of Stephen Hopkins's public life as deputy, chief justice, governor, and statesman, we have comparatively small concern. It is as a townsman in Providence that he commands our interest and admiration, and not the least interesting of his many schemes for the public welfare is his zeal in the establishment of a public subscription library. Probably no settlement in New England of equal size was so destitute of books as was Providence. She had but lately made her first feeble attempt to provide a schoolhouse for her children. No bookseller was found sufficiently sanguine to open a shop for his wares until ten years later than the period of which we are speaking. It was in February, 1754, that a group of five substantial citizens, headed by Stephen Hopkins, represented to the Colonial Assembly that, prompted by a desire "to promote useful Knowledge," they had "made a voluntary sub-

### STEPHEN HOPKINS HOUSE

Built about 1742, moved up Hopkins Lane from its former location on the Main Street in 1804. From a photograph by Willis A. Dean, 1911.









scription, and thereby . . . raised and sent to England a sum of money sufficient to purchase books to furnish a small library." This effort had, however, exhausted their resources, and in the hope of securing "a proper place to keep the books in when they arrive," the Assembly was petitioned for leave to put them in the council chambers in the Court-House. It was further represented that this arrangement, "so far from being any inconvenience, . . . would be a real ornament to the house, and afford an agreeable amusement to the members in their leisure hours."

Unless the novelty of handling new and standard works may justly be denominated a diversion, it is difficult to realize that the average assemblyman could be expected to amuse himself with Milton, Locke, Pufendorf, and other works of a similarly light and frivolous nature which adorned the shelves. Instruction was, however, sufficiently tempered with recreation to admit the presence of Plutarch, Tacitus, Prince's *New England Chronology*, and Franklin's work on electricity, and it is possible that these appeared more amusing to our forefathers than they would to us of the present day, who are brought up on that prepared breakfast-food of literature, — the magazine.

Five years later, the Colony House was burned, and with it that portion of the library which was not at the moment in the hands of the subscribers. It

had already proved a popular and valuable institution. The Colonial Assembly, on being duly informed of its destruction, pronounced it "a very valuable collection of books," and enacted that of the two thousand milled dollars to be raised by a lottery for rebuilding the Court-House and purchasing a library, one half should be devoted to the latter end. The only condition imposed was that the members of the General Assembly should have free access to the shelves, whereby we may fairly assume either that the contents proved to be a restful alternative to the labors of legislation, or that then, as now, the average citizen valued the privilege of getting something for nothing—even when he did not want it. At a later session it was formally resolved that the reestablishment of the library was a work "of a public nature, tending to promote virtue and the good of mankind," and on these grounds permission was given the "proprietors of the late library" "to put forth a lottery sufficient to raise twelve hundred milled dollars, for reestablishing said library."

The new home in which the reestablished library was duly installed, was of an entirely different and much more pretentious type than the old Colony House, whose dimensions arouse astonishment rather than admiration. The new Colony House — now known as the old State House — bears witness to the growth of prosperity and civic pride in the course of

OLD STATE HOUSE

North Main Street, built 1760. From a photograph  
taken in 1911.







a generation. It was placed, in accordance with the directions of the Colonial Assembly, "upon the very Commodious and suitable Lot to the Northward of that whereon the meeting House of the People called Quakers stands." It is a well-proportioned building of the colonial type, built of red brick with brown stone trimmings. Later additions have done much to spoil its symmetry of outline. Nevertheless, it is not without a certain oldtime dignity, as it stands facing the Towne Street, at the head of the long, gently-sloping parade, shadowed with trees, and flanked by the spacious mansion-houses of a bygone generation. Its walls have witnessed many a public gathering, some of great, and some of little, moment. Across its threshold have passed the nation's heroes, and the guests whom a grateful country has delighted to honor.

It was several years before the burning of the Old Colony House that the adjoining headquarters of the town's criminal population, namely, the gaol, was removed to a more conveniently accessible neighborhood. The old situation at the corner of Benefit and Meeting Streets had proved "very inconvenient both as to Water and carting Wood," for it was necessary to carry these requisites to comfort "some Distance up a Hill," and in order to mitigate the consequent distress, "not only of the Gaol Keeper, but the poor Prisoners," the colony declared itself prepared "to build a good new Gaol House . . . of a suitable

Bigness," on condition that the town of Providence should provide "a good convenient Lot of Land" for the purpose.

One member of the committee appointed to deal with this problem was Stephen Hopkins, already a leader of public opinion and public enterprise. Stephen Hopkins came before the next town-meeting to suggest a certain "convenient Lot" as "a proper place" for the new gaol. With all due deference to the abilities of this great statesman, it must be allowed that his ideas of propriety would hardly be acceptable to the present generation. His suggestion was — and it was forthwith adopted by a unanimous vote — that "the flats in the Salt River being the west end of the Lott . . . whereon the Towne Schoole house . . . standeth," be appropriated for the new gaol. The schoolhouse, fronting on the Towne Street, was to occupy eighty feet of the lot, and the gaol was to have the remainder, extending over the mud flats to the channel in midstream. A year later the new gaol was ready for business and proved to be of a sufficiently "suitable Bigness" to satisfy the county's taxpayers, if not the prisoners, until 1799, when it was replaced by a larger building on the same site. The street to the south of the gaol lot, leading to the salt water, was at once dubbed Gaol Lane, while that which passed its former abiding-place became Old Gaol Lane.

The lot whereon stood both schoolhouse and gaol,



bearing witness to the town's solicitude for the mental and moral welfare of its citizens, — young and old, — had been set apart for educational purposes certainly as early as 1747. It was across the street from the parade of the old Colony House. We also find that a school committee was annually instructed to take charge of the schoolhouse, "and to appoint a school-master to teach" therein. Nor are we without information as to the instruction furnished.

Among the documents in possession of the Rhode Island Historical Society is the "Cipher Book of John Brown, 1752," a silent witness to three years' diligent devotion to arithmetic on the part of number three of the four brothers Brown. One page bears the legend: "John Brown his Cyphring Book 1749." The course of study began with the definition, "Addition Is an Arithmetical gathering of Divers Sums together to Produce one Total." Examples of a general nature follow the exposition of the four fundamentals — addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division. We find, for example: "How many Sparrows at 10 a Penny will buy a Yoke of Oxen at £10 Price." And again, "Suppose it 45 miles to Boston, How many Barley Corns will Reach there." The solution is neatly worked out, and we sympathize with the pride of the boy of fourteen, who wrote in a round hand at the foot of the page, — "John Brown the Cleverest boy in Providence Town." Another heading reads: "The Golden Rule, or rule

of 3. This is the Golden Rule for the Excellency thereof." Then follow practical directions: "To work any Question In the Rule of Three, you must Observe the following Rule: —

"If the 4th the Second must Exceed then See  
By the Great Extream It Multiplyèd be  
But if it must be Less than Second Aim  
To Multiply it by the Less Extream."

John Brown was the son of one of the first among Providence sea-captains to voyage to the West Indies, whence many a cargo of molasses was shipped for the shop on the Towne Street at home. He must have "ciphered" with all the zest of experience on such problems as the following: "A Merchant in Providence buys 48 Tun of Molasses at Barbadoes for 672*l.* The freight from thence to Providence Cost him 160*l.* for Loading and unloading 72*l.* for Custom 12*l.* and Other Charges 7*l.* and would Gain 250*l.* by the Bargain. What is the Price of 16 Tun of Said Molasses."

John Brown and his school-fellows belonged to a generation whose fathers earned a livelihood on the sea and over the counter. Their demands for their children's schooling were of a practical nature, based on the needs of the coasting-trade and the shop. John and his friends were taught accordingly. They learned the "Rules in Trett and Tare &c. Tare Is the weight of the Bagg Chest &c. Wherein the Goods are Carried or put." "Trett Is an Allowance

of 4 lb. in 104 lb. for Goods wherein is Loss as, Treacle, Sugar, &c.” They also learned the rules for barter, by which, indeed, the greater part of the town’s business was conducted. They learned “Variety,” of which the following problem may serve as an example: “A Tobaconist would mix 20 lb. of Tobacco at 9*d.* a lb. with 40 lb. at 12*d.* a lb. and with 30 lb. at 18 Pence and with 12 lb. at 2 Shillings a Pound, What will a Pound of this mixture be worth?” The answer is, “2*s.* 2*d.* 6-17 farth.” There were sums in square root, sums in finding a ship’s latitude, and finally, directions: “To measure a Ship, to find her Tunnage” — “Rule first Say as 1: Breadth:: Half the Breadth: a fourth Number. again as 94: the fourth Number:: her length: Tunnage.”

This record of eighteenth-century school-days takes an added interest from the fact that the boy who figured at latitude, ships’ tonnage, and the profits of a West-Indian cargo was to fill the position of the leading merchant of his native seaport, and to become the pioneer in her East-India trade. John Brown’s instructor during those three eventful years of ciphering is not known. In 1753, we find our old friend, George Taylor, of King’s Church Parish, officiating as town schoolmaster, with the proviso that he, “the s’d George doth . . . Oblige himself to . . . teach one poor Child, such as the s’d Committee shall recommend, Gratis, or for nothing.”

The inference is that instruction for the remaining pupils was furnished on a different basis.

After the burning of the old Colony House, in 1758, and in response to an apparent and not altogether surprising dissatisfaction with the environment provided by the town for the educational pursuits of its young people, it was decided to sell the town schoolhouse and lot, and to use the money thus obtained for the purchase of "a more Convenient Lot, and Building a Publick School House . . . To be kept up forever for the same publick Emoluments as the old . . . School was, or ought to have been." The site of the old Colony House was selected and approved. The plan attracted the attention of the townspeople, the interest became general, and at length public sentiment was sufficiently aroused to undertake to "purchase or erect Three School Houses for the Education of Small children and one for the Education of Youth." But by the time that the reports of the committees appointed to consider sites, buildings, and regulations were brought in, the wave of popular enthusiasm had subsided. The reports were rejected, and only "the School House near the Court House" finally appeared as the result of a really enlightened scheme for public education.

The new schoolhouse is the brick two-storied structure still standing on Meeting Street, and known as the "Old Brick Schoolhouse." Among the provisions for the education of youth embodied in the

rejected report of the town's committee, we find the following suggestions as to a desirable curriculum: two hours in each day should be "taken up . . . in perfecting the scholars in reading and properly understanding the English tongue." The remaining time at the disposal of the student might, it was thought, be advantageously devoted to "writing, arithmetic, the various branches of mathematics, and the learned languages."

The Brick Schoolhouse was paid for in part by the town, and in part by private subscription. The proprietors owned the upper story of the building, and the town the lower, and we are told that the town appointed masters to keep school in their part of the building, and that this arrangement was kept up until 1785. Another schoolhouse was built, entirely by private enterprise, in 1768. This was Whipple Hall, at the North End of the town, so called in grateful acknowledgment of the generosity of Captain John Whipple, who donated the lot. This schoolhouse was one story in height, with a hipped roof surmounted by a belfry. The subscribers — forty-two in number — paid a tuition fee of four shillings and sixpence. Outsiders were charged an additional two shillings. Two schools were accommodated within the walls of Whipple Hall, and of these the upper grade was in charge of the estimable Geoge Taylor.

On the West Side of the Great River a subscription

for building a schoolhouse had been started in 1751, when the town was petitioned for liberty to build "at the sandy hill called Fowler's hill by Joseph Snow Junrs dwelling house," and when it was ascertained that there was "sufficient Roome and not damnifie the highway," the prayer of the petitioners was readily granted. But alas! the cause of academic progress was doomed to disappointment. For the stated width of the highway being fifty feet, there was left at the disposal of the subscribers just sixteen feet for the accommodation of the proposed schoolhouse. The West-Siders wasted no more time haggling with the town-meeting, but with characteristic energy and dispatch bought a lot and built a schoolhouse at the corner of Mathewson and Chapel Streets. The building was finished in 1754, in good time to serve as a model for the East Side Whipple Hall.

One result of the destruction of the Old Colony House was the conviction thus brought home to the townspeople that they were without adequate protection against fire. In 1754 "the inhabitants of the compact part of the town" had taken it on themselves to inform the Colonial Assembly that there was "a great Necessity to have a Water-Engine of a Large Size purchased, to extinguish Fires that may casually break out in said Town; and that the best way to Obtain one will be by laying a Tax on the Houses, Goods, & other things to be destroyed by Fire."

The Assembly readily accorded the petitioners permission to tax themselves for the protection of their own property and — strange to relate! — a tax was actually levied, and an engine procured from London. It proved in some respects a disappointment to the purchasers, who found “the workmanship . . . not Agreeable to [the makers’] Discription.” At the normal rate of progress in undertakings of a public nature this engine can hardly have been delivered in Providence under two years, — that is to say, in 1756. In 1758, the town was called on to pay six pounds and ten shillings to one Mr. Amos Atwell, “it being for mending the Engine,” and no doubt this amount seemed to the frugal-minded taxpayer an excessive sum to be set down to “wear and tear.”

The loss of the Colony House in December, 1758, emphasized afresh the shortcomings of the fire department, both in equipment and in organization. Before a month had gone by, the rate for a new engine was assessed. Two hundred and twenty-two substantial townsmen contributed. The total amount obtained was £2764, in colonial currency. Elisha Brown figures as the largest taxpayer. He paid £60. The smallest assessment was £2. It was not, however, until a year later that matters were sufficiently advanced to enable the committee in charge — namely, Obadiah Brown and James Angell — to send an order for the new engine to Joseph Sher-

wood, the colony's agent in London. A bill of exchange for eighty pounds sterling accompanied a description of the engine desired. This was to be a "Fifth Size Engine . . . made in the best manner, Lin'd & Compleated for the Working of Salt Waters as the Scituation of this town Requires." It was to have "Three Length of Leathern pipe 40 feet each with Brass Screws & One sucking pipe of Ten feet Compleat." The agent was begged to take particular care that all specifications were duly fulfilled, and the matter was carefully explained to be "a Government Concern," since the committee, although acting for the town of Providence, were appointed by the General Assembly.

To this request Friend Joseph replied in due course that the engine was purchased and would soon be shipped, and expressed his great pleasure at "Every Opportunity of Oblidging any part of the Colony or any Particular Gentleman in it." This effusion was penned in June, 1760, and in December the engine was reported safe at Boston. A town-meeting was promptly summoned for the purpose of raising money to pay the freight from Boston to Providence, and "to devise some proper place for Keeping of said Engine when Come to hand." The first point at issue was covered by the assessment of a "rate," and shortly after, five boxes of "Spermacete Candles" were despatched to Boston, "to replace the money advanced for freight — with Interest." It was fur-



ther resolved that "the Largest Engine" should be kept at the "House at the Bridge opposit Judge Jenckes," and "the other . . . on the Gangway to the South of the Baptis Meeting House," namely, Smith Street.

The mechanism of this new importation is believed to have been a combination of sea-pumps, attached to a large tub-like tank, and worked by long arms, or handles. The tank was filled by "good leathern buckets," of which each housekeeper was required by law to possess two. Men and boys formed lines from the engine to the source of supply, and the brimming buckets were passed up to the tank by one line, and came back empty by the other. Good order and systematic treatment of the case in hand were insured by the presence of fire-wards or wardens, appointed from different parts of the town, and each having "a Proper Badge assigned him . . . to Wit, A Speaking Trumpet coloured red." These officers were authorized by the Colonial Legislature "to require and command Assistance for Suppressing and extinguishing the Fire." The same august authority required of each fire-warden that, "upon Notice of the breaking forth of Fire," he should "take his Badge, and repair immediately to the Place, and vigorously exert his Authority."

The limits of "the compact part of the Town of Providence," within which the above rules and regulations applied, were duly set forth as follows: "The

House of Jabez Whipple, and that of Peter Randal, standing opposite to it [these worthies lived just south of the present North Burial Ground] and from thence Southward, all the Buildings that are or shall be erected, butting on or near adjacent to the Streets both old and new [just at this time new streets were being opened in several parts of the town], . . . together with all the Mills and Houses in that part of the Town which is called Charlestown [between Smith and Orms Streets, and extending to the river] as far Westward as the Town Pound [at the corner of Smith and Charles Streets]; and all such Part of the said Town as is called the Point, as far Westward as the Burying Ground." The "Point" was Weybosset Point, and the drift of the town's population westward within fifteen years had been such as to bring the "compact part" thereof to the boundary of Doctor John Hoyle's unfortunate purchase for the first group of worshippers "in the Congregational or Presbyterian way." It will, perhaps, be remembered that, although the infant society refused to build their meeting-house beyond the confines of civilization, they took the land off Hoyle's hands. It was used as a burial-ground until late in the eighteenth century. Fifty-two of the contributors to the new fire-engine in 1760 lived on the west side of Weybosset Bridge.

Some ten years later, the Providence town-meeting deemed it advisable to draw up certain supplement-

ary "Rules and Regulations" for the proper procedure in time of fire. These treated the matter in more detail than those furnished by the Colonial Assembly. The town fathers, in their published code, required "every Person to take Care . . . to inform where the Fire is," and at the same time warned "every Person" that before running to the fire he should "take Care to put on his Cloaths, and take his Buckets in his Hand." Once arrived at the scene of action, all were to be "as silent as possible, that they may hear the Directions," and to obey the same "without Noise or Contradiction." A timely caution to those "who have the Right to command at Fires" follows. They must "take great Care to appear calm and firm on those Occasions, and give their . . . Directions with distinct Clearness, and great Authority"; and above all, "be very careful not to contradict one another." To the turbulent democracy at large there is addressed a tactful statement to the effect that the authority thus exercised by the fire-wardens is not given them "meerly that they may command and domineer over their Neighbours . . . but the absolute Necessity of the Case requires it, and the Safety of the whole depends upon it," etc.

We feel, as we read, that the pioneer fire-brigades of Providence strongly resembled that famous regiment of Artemus Ward's, wherein all the privates demanded to be brigadier-generals.



## Chapter VII

### THE SHIPPING TRADE

**T**HERE is another aspect of the town's growth, and it is one of fundamental importance. The influence of the fast-swelling commerce of the port of Providence must have been a considerable factor, not only in providing solid profits wherewith to pay for court-house and school-house, but still more in enlarging the mental, as well as the nautical, horizon of her worthy traders. It brought to the complacent stay-at-home people a realizing sense of their own shortcomings as compared with those of other communities.

As a matter of fact, the commerce of Rhode Island antedates her existence as a colony. The wide-awake Dutch colonists of the seventeenth century had established their trading-posts in Narragansett Bay before either Roger Williams or Anne Hutchinson took refuge on its quiet shores. Nor were the settlers of Newport slow to enter into their heritage. Their lands were scarcely surveyed before a sawmill was set up and timber cut for the export trade. Shipyards were filling orders as early as 1646. The shipping-trade of Newport grew with really wonderful rapidity, and until well into the eighteenth century she was the headquarters for by far the greater part

of the trade of Providence, in manufactured articles and dry goods.

We may be very sure that local imports in both these lines of trade were but meagre during the seventeenth century. The farmers of Providence were far too poverty-stricken to indulge in much besides the necessities of existence. Such articles as were brought into town from Newport or Rehoboth were paid for in tobacco, pease, and similar farm produce. The annals of the Providence shipping of the seventeenth century are quickly told. The first evidence of an export trade appears in 1652, when John Smith of Providence sent a consignment of flour, tobacco, and pease to Newfoundland. By the end of another ten years we find indications of a more or less extensive trade between Providence and Barbadoes. When William Field made his will, in 1665, he included among the items of his property "all that cargo that is now upon Sending to the Barbados," and also "that which is as yett coming to me from the Barbados, which is from thence due to me."

As for imports, there are two recorded voyages made by the sloop of Providence Williams (the oldest son of Roger). One was on that well-known occasion, at the close of King Philip's War, when he removed the Indian prisoners from Providence to the colony gaol at Newport. The other took place three years later, when Captain Arthur Fenner "shipped on

board of providence Williams his Sloope" three barrels of rum, one hundredweight of sugar, one panier, and "one Collor for a horse." Five years after the shipment of this important consignment, we find a Boston skipper bringing into Newport four casks of rum and two barrels of molasses for "the use and Account of John Whipple of the Towne of Providence."

By this time (1684) warehouse lots along the shore, "with the privilege of a whorfe allso," had been already granted to some dozen of the more stirring spirits among the townspeople. In 1712, Nathaniel Brown of Kittle Point was given land on Weybosset Neck for his shipyard. Although doubt has been expressed as to the actual setting-up of the shipyard at that point, — since five years later that and other adjacent and unimproved lands were laid out by the town as town-land, — there can be no doubt that somewhere Nathaniel Brown built vessels for Providence traders, and notably for the two Crawfords, Major William and Captain John. Nor was Nathaniel Brown the only shipwright available. There are evidences of the existence of a shipyard at the southern end of the Towne Street in these early days of the eighteenth century; while before 1720, John Barnes was filling orders at his shipyard north of Weybosset Bridge, at the foot of the present Waterman Street.

By 1720, the era of the sea-trade of Providence was

fairly under way. The eight years intervening since the town's grant to Nathaniel Brown had witnessed the appearance in this particular field of action of the men who became the merchant-adventurers of the little seaport. Their pluck and perseverance laid the foundations of firms whose reputation has become international. The long lethargy of the Providence husbandman was broken. He awoke to the fact that swapping live stock and "parcels" of land need not fill life's possibilities for himself and his sons. He went down to the sea in ships; he came in contact with men of other countries, nationalities, and customs; and he gained thereby a self-reliance, a poise, a capacity for dealing with men and with affairs, which is attained in no school save that of experience. The man who took a sloop of from twenty to sixty tons burden from the Providence wharf on the Towne Street to St. Eustatius, Martinique, or Surinam, there to dispose of his cargo of horses, lumber, candles, and cheese, and to purchase a cargo for the return voyage, must needs have been a man of judgment, of shrewd business ability, of resource, and of an energy that frequently merged into audacity.

Foremost in the ranks of those who exchanged the profession of farmer and land-trader for that of sailor and ship-owner, we find representatives of the Tillinghast, Power, and Brown families. Colonel Nicholas Power was the third of that name. His grandfather settled in Providence in 1642. His father

was killed in the Great Swamp Fight of King Philip's War. It may be that as his infant son grew to manhood his imagination was stirred by tales of the large plantations in Surinam, which were said to have been his grandfather's. It is sad to have to allow that the estates were purely mythical, but young Nicholas — like many another lad — may have found in fancy a stimulus to action far more potent than prosaic facts. It is not improbable that Nicholas Power found opportunity to crystallize his dreams in the form of shares in the vessels of his brother-in-law, Benjamin Tillinghast, the son of our old acquaintance, Elder Pardon Tillinghast. When Benjamin Tillinghast died in 1726, he left to his heirs a "third part" of one sloop, and "a quarter part" of another, while his warehouses were replete with "coco, salt, sugar, molasses Rum and other Spirits," and sundry ship goods. Colonel Nicholas Power and his wife, Mercy Tillinghast, were blessed with a family of five daughters and one son. The oldest daughter, Hope Power, was wooed and won by a sailor lad, and on December 21, 1722, she bestowed her heart and hand on the rising young captain and ship-owner, James Brown.

This James Brown was the great-grandson of Chad Brown, "first-comer," and also first town-surveyor. His father — likewise James — was a well-to-do citizen and husbandman, and a steadfast upholder of the Baptist doctrine according to the "six principles in Hebrews 6. 1. 2." There is still extant a letter of



his, written to elucidate his views in the eyes of “a meeting of the baptized congregation in providence,” in which he makes use of the following quaint illustration: “Why aneyman Should pretend to leve out aney one of those six principles sencit will but Weaken the building — I propose that if aney man should agree with a carpender to build him a house and to finish it Workmanlike for such a Sum of money, and the carpender should Leve out one of the principle parts or foundation of the house, the man would find falt and Workmen would condem the carpender. Suppose the man should indent with the carpender to make 6 windos in the 1st room, but the carpender being in a hurre makes but 5, the man would be afended and the carpender condemned by good workmen, but if this way of reasoning bee Wright then to leve out areaone of the six princyple of christs docterin is rong. but to keep them together as in hebrews the 6th makes a rule of communian.”

Elder James Brown stood by his creed with that uncompromising “rigour” of which the worthy Mrs. Battle was so earnest an advocate. He is on record as one of those who agreed that “if any Brother or Sister shall join in Prayer without the bounds of the Church they are liable to be dealt with by the Church for their offending their Brethren.” James, Junior, also signed this expression of unanimity of opinion, — if not of good will. A few years later, however, a more charitable point of view commended itself to him,

and in a somewhat remarkable document, written in May, 1738, about a year before his death, he addresses his neighbors as follows: "That if it be the pleasure of the Heavens to take the Breath out of my Mortal Body . . . I am Quite free and Willing that My Body may be Opened, in Order that my fellow Cretures and Neighbours may See Whether My Grievance hath been nothing but the Spleen or not. And one thing more I would leave with you (my Neighbours) which is the Ignorance of all Ministers who have disputes and debates Concerning the way of their Sarving their God; they do not consider that it is Makeing him inferiour to themselves; which Me-thinks they would not do, if they could but see and Consider that they themselves have an Equal Respect to their Children, Servants, or Others of their fellow Creatures when they Serve them Equally alike."

This, however, is anticipating the chronological order of events. Almost two years before he became the husband of Hope Power, James Brown, Junior, — then a young man of twenty-three, — appears as one of five partners, "all of Providence," who employed a certain "John Barns of Providence" to build a sloop; "said Sloop to be forty five foote by the Keele; seaventeene foot and halfe by the beame and seavon foot and halfe in the Whole." She was to be delivered "afloate on the north side of Way-bausett Bridg," and to be paid for "after the Rate of Two pounds & seaventeene shillings pr Tun." An-

other digression from the path of chronological narration must be made at this point to enable us to calculate the tonnage of the new sloop by means of the rule neatly inscribed in *John Brown's Cipher Book*, some thirty years later. In this way we learn that John Brown's father's sloop, built in 1721, was a vessel of about seventy-three tons. When the contract was signed, James Brown owned a quarter interest in the new boat. Before a year had passed he had purchased another quarter.

Events followed fast in the life of this resolute young man during the next few years. He was married in December, 1722. Six weeks later we find him on the quarter-deck of "the Sloop Named the four bachelors," as Captain James Brown. The good sloop was lying in Newport Harbor, ready "to Sayl with the first fair Wind & Weather . . . to Some of the Leeward Islands in the West Indies." When there, her captain was ordered to dispose of the cargo, and also of the sloop "if an Oportunity presents . . . and To lay out the produce thereof in Such Commodities . . . as your Judgement & discretion Shall direct you: for our best advantage . . . and So God Send you a prosperous Voyage." And with this pious wish, good Nicholas Power signed his name, "in behalf of myself & Company owners of the Said Sloop and Cargo on board." By the following October the gallant captain had come safe to port, and we are surely justified in assuming the voy-

age a prosperous one, for once ashore Captain James straightway opened a shop on the Towne Street, on a warehouse lot some seventy feet south of the corner where College Street meets Market Square, and just across the way from his own home. It is to the wise forethought of his youngest son, Moses, that we of the present day are indebted for the preservation of the documents in which these details are found. That same indefatigable investigator of things genealogical and historical has left us two, out of three, of his father's shop-ledgers, and they have proved a mine of information for all facts and details respecting the stock in trade and business methods of this the first department store in Providence.

#### JAMES BROWNS FIRST LEDGER

1723

opens with an index of his customers, alphabetically arranged according to the initial letter of their given names, and phonetically spelled in accordance with the compiler's interpretation of sound. Under the letter "B" we find —

Brother Joseph  
Bainonai Crabtrey  
Bainonai watterman  
Brother andrew Brown

Under "D" we have —

Danel Oldney  
doctor Gebbs  
doctor Jabis Boin

LETTER OF "DIRECTIONS" FROM JAMES BROWN TO HIS  
WIFE, AUGUST 23, 1737

From the Moses Brown Papers, vol. 1, p. 3, in the Rhode  
Island Historical Society.



providence August 23<sup>th</sup> 1737 my dear  
if you follow these following ~~directions~~ directions whilst  
I am gone you may do well: & if I never come  
if you should look on them one in a while they  
will do no harm in your Affairs.

Strive no man one penny worth of any thing  
Lett them not have a penny thing without money  
saying such as we do to: and take all the  
Care you can that you <sup>State</sup> is not stolen  
from you: Comfort Baginier is to have 296  
Gallons of Rum he finding Cask <sup>But</sup> than  
he should pay the Gallons on the Book  
first ~~to~~: tak all the ~~out~~ out of  
the still house as soon as frank hath maid it up  
put it in to the cask: tak that new Cask and top  
it ~~is~~ in the port or one of the towers which will  
come in le that I am: my dear if any thing is ready  
in you it will be Care





“F” shows us —

Father Brown  
feirnot packer  
francis hambilton  
Father Power

Occasionally a man's trade is given, as “Paul the tanner, Allin the Blockmason, Tom indian.” A stranger is often designated as such: “Thomas Stevens of Plainfield; William admons of Wansoket.”

The indebtedness of the customer is entered item by item on the left-hand page, and opposite appear such articles accepted, or services rendered, as may be credited to his account. The first entry in the book serves to conclude the tale of the cruise of the *Four Bachelors* to the Leeward Islands. Under the date of October 9, 1723, we read that Mr. Nicholas Powers's account is settled, and that there is “du to him £4. 0. 1, onley he is to pay £37. 10. 0 to the wanscut main [men] for their partes of the sloop foure Bachilors.”

The responsibilities of captain, supercargo, and shopkeeper did not weigh so heavily on our young merchant-adventurer as to repress all manifestations of that exuberance of spirits which is one of the prerogatives of youth. On at least one occasion his superfluous energy so shocked the standard of decorum prevailing in Newport that a worthy citizen of that highly respectable town entered a complaint against

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"Capt. James Browne Junr . . . for the breach of his majestyes Peace." Captain James, on being brought before the court at Providence, "owned the fact," and was sentenced to pay "the Sum of twelve shillings Currant money as a fine to his Majestye." We have no information as to the manner in which the peace of Newport was thus violently disturbed. Perhaps Captain James Brown's idea of fun was not dissimilar to that of his sons, some twenty-five years later, when Moses Brown, at Lebanon, was informed by a letter of young Jabez Bowen that "Brothers J. Brown and J. Updike have Broke the Meeting Hous windows. You must make hast home or Else you will Loose the Cream." It seems pretty evident that Captain James made sure of the "Cream," and cheerfully paid the bill.

It is also evident that a man of his energy and ability would not find either of these attributes exhausted by the demands of his business on the Towne Street. Wife, home, and shop could not suffice to keep our gallant captain in port. On February 24, 1727, he "sailed oute from Behind dumpileng" (Dumpling), master of the sloop *Truth and Delight*, with "a Brave Gail and fair wether . . . Bounde to martinneco." Luckily for the inquirer of to-day, Captain James took with him his book of geometrical and nautical problems, evidently a relic of his prentice days at sea, for he has written on the fly leaf, "Begun Octob the 24th 1719." The little volume is chiefly concerned

with "Navigation, an art by which the Industrious marriner Is Enabled to Conduct a Ship the Shortest & Safest way between any two assigned places," and to assure that desirable end there are carefully worked-out problems in "Plain Sailing," in "Compound Courses," and in "Parallel Sailing."

The last ten pages have preserved for us the log of the *Truth and Delight*. We find the customary record of wind and weather. On March 4, "verey Blustering wether with rain" covered the decks with twelve inches of water, and stove in the hogsheads placed there. On March 14, Fort Royal in Martinico was reached, and until May 31, the *Truth and Delight* lay in port, unloading her cargo of eleven horses, fifteen hogsheads of Indian corn, sixteen hundred-weight of tobacco, seven hundred pounds of cheese, six barrels of tar, twelve thousand, six hundred feet of boards, and twelve thousand shingles. This accomplished, and "a Barril of rum for the vessels youse" purchased, Captain Brown secured a return cargo of forty hogsheads of molasses and sixteen hogsheads of rum, and "Sailed oute of Martineco . . . Bound for Roadisland of a wensday a Bought 5 in the afternoon" of May 31. The monotony of the ship's log on the home voyage is broken on one occasion by the record of "two dolphin caught to day Butt have no Butter to et with them: which is verey hard," the Captain adds. By June 19, the *Truth and Delight* was almost at Newport Harbor:

“haid the Lastime we sounded 43 faddoms . . . which I Jug to Be in Blok island Chanil,” writes her captain, and with “a good Bres at S W,” the stanch little sloop spread her white wings and bore away toward home.

From this time Captain James appears to have given up following the sea as a profession. As an investment, he continued to follow with keen interest the conditions of foreign and home markets until his early death, in 1739. Indeed, the demands of his trade as shopkeeper would seem to have required much time and sagacity, — both as buyer and seller. His shop offered an assortment of necessities and luxuries so varied as to be positively picturesque. Thither his neighbors came for wheat, flannel, brooms, cotton-wool, linen cloth, pepper, flax, boards (oak and other), beef, stockings, twine, dry goods such as Osnaburgs, silk, crape, garlits, etc.; bottles, grindstones, powder and shot, and more frequently than for aught else — rum, molasses, and salt. Good, pious Elder James’s account, for the last months of his upright life, ran like this: —

|               |                            |          |
|---------------|----------------------------|----------|
| Nov. 22, 1731 | father is du to gallon rum | o. 7. 0  |
|               | to quarter pound powder    | o. 1. 4  |
| 25            | to Boshil solte            | o. 7. 0  |
| dec. 8        | to gallon Rum              | o. 7. 0  |
|               | to deto                    | o. 7. 0  |
| Jan. 1        | to deto Andrew had         | o. 7. 0  |
| 28            | to deto                    | o. 7. 0  |
| feby 29       | to gallon rum and cheese   | o. 13. 5 |

In the following year we learn that:—

Father power is du to sundres as folloth

|  | £  | s   | d |
|--|----|-----|---|
| firste to apair of stokins                   | 0. | 7.  | 0 |
| to two yardes and halff garlik at 4s.        | 0. | 10. | 0 |
| to Cotton woll nicholis had                  | 1. | 4.  | 0 |
| to Cotton woll and molasis a man had that    |    |     |   |
| Came with mosey                              | 0. | 14. | 0 |
| to timber, making & setting up gates & other |    |     |   |
| fence in the nek                             | 1. | 7.  | 0 |
| to the youse of my scow                      | 0. | 2.  | 6 |
| to pd. Samwell Ladd for shuing his horse     | 0. | 1.  | 7 |
| to the frate of glas & Led from Boston       | 0. | 5.  | 0 |
| to Earthen wair                              | 0. | 4.  | 6 |
| to a pair stokins                            | 0. | 12. | 6 |
| to deto                                      | 0. | 12. | 6 |
| to a gallon rum                              | 0. | 6.  | 6 |
| to money                                     | 0. | 10. | 0 |
| to 3 Raks                                    | 0. | 6.  | 0 |
| to a saith                                   | 0. | 13. | 0 |
| to arum Borges                               | 0. | 1.  | 8 |
|  | 7. | 17. | 9 |

— while on the opposite page Father Power is duly credited with malt, oakum, and fish, amounting to £7. 9. 4.

When Colonel Power died in 1734, his son-in-law mourned his loss of a kind friend and sagacious adviser. His will testifies to the good feeling existing between the two men, for to James and Hope Brown are left two “small lots of land,” one on the east, and one on the west side of the Great River. The other married daughters and their husbands received each one “small lot of land.”

The Colonel lived in a rather more sumptuous fashion than the majority of his neighbors. His spacious homestead on the Towne Street, where the Talma Theatre now stands, was graced with the smiles and blushes of five gay girls, and must have welcomed many a jolly party within the "greate lower room" of which his appraisers tell us. His was one of the earliest, if not the first, house in Providence to be provided with a "dineing room." Among the "dineing room furniture" was an oval table of a size to accommodate fourteen chairs and "a Leather Cheair," doubtless that of the Colonel himself. Andirons, tongs, and fire-shovel bear authentic witness to the capacious fireplace, whose dimensions outdid even our modern standards of hospitality. Next, we must fancy a "Large Lookeing Glass," a clock, a glass-case (presumably a corner cupboard), and table plenishings of pewter, for the most part. We are told that the "dineing room" provided also "Chafeing Dishes, 3 Brass skillets, a Brass Kittle, 2 Punch boles and a stone Jugg & Cups."

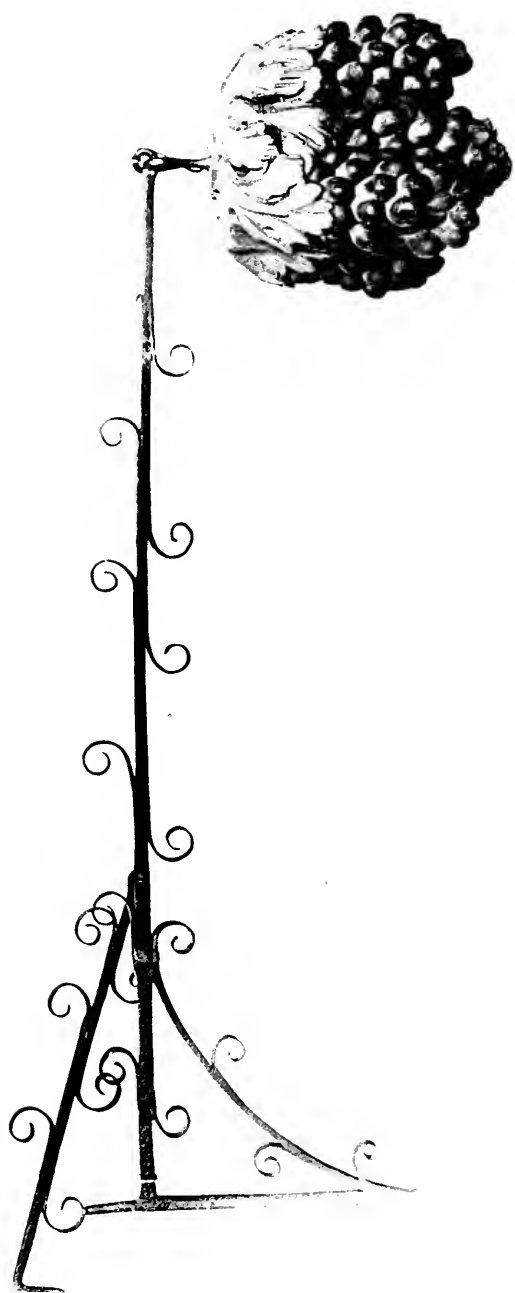
Among the neighbors that fancy so readily pictures, gathered about the Colonel's hospitable board, and the smoking punch-bowl which served as centre-piece, let us single out Captain James Brown. He and his wife's father doubtless figured the profits on many an invoice, and planned the course of many a cruise — whether to Newfoundland, New York, or the West Indies. Another son-in-law of Colonel

SIGN OF "THE BUNCH OF GRAPES"

One of the most famous of the early commercial signs of Providence, and dating from about 1760. Now in the museum of the Rhode Island Historical Society.









Power's was also a frequent visitor, and his shrewd counsel was often at the service of Captain James. This was John Stuart, goldsmith, whose profession did not make such exhaustive demands on his time and attention but that he was able to give a share of both to the carrying-trade. He was the owner of a "sloop and the appertinances thereunto belonging," and must have been an appreciative listener to the sea-yarns exchanged between Colonel Power and Captain James Brown. He and the Captain had their own little personal transactions, probably to the satisfaction of both parties, for we find in the Captain's shop-ledger charges for lamb, tar, broadcloth, mohair, boards, rum, etc., and finally a memorandum to the effect that there will be due to John Stuart on the last of the following November, "if he Keeps the Clock in order as in time past he hath, the Sum of ten shillings."

John Stuart had a clock of his own valued at no less than forty pounds, while his silver watch was estimated at twenty-five. He also owned a violin, and a most extraordinary possession it must have seemed to his good friends and neighbors. His goldsmith's trade was no illusion, although we can hardly think of Providence as a centre for the manufacture of jewelry so early as the year of grace 1736. However that may be, we have his appraisers' recorded testimony to the effect that John Stuart left goldsmith's tools to the value of sixty pounds, and also

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“one Penney Wt. 22 Grains of Gold: 21 oz. 10 Pwt., Silver,” the whole coming to £30. 19. 8.

Colonel Power's estate likewise included a sloop, *The Sparrow*, worth one hundred pounds. He owned a warehouse, a cooper's shop, a cider-mill, and three stills; and it is worthy of remark that this is the first mention of the machinery of the distiller's trade, on a scale to furnish more than personal consumption, that has been found among the Providence inventories. Colonel Power had also a cheese-press, four negro slaves, a silver-hilted sword, an ivory-headed cane, decanters, wine-glasses, and silver plate. In short, all the requisite household furnishings that became a “good old English gentleman” and a merchant-adventurer.

As we have seen, the greater portion of “Father Power's” bill for “sundres” and other supplies was paid by an exchange of commodities, or services, and the statement holds good respecting the majority of the customers who patronized this eighteenth-century emporium. In 1736, Robert Nixon cancelled his debt for rum, coffee, sugar, rice, and pepper by making “nine froks . . . he finding thread & buttons,” for three shillings each. For making “a pair of trows's & finding thread &c.,” this accomplished tailor was paid two shillings and sixpence. Even neighborly courtesies, whether muscular or mechanical, were exchanged on a strictly cash basis. The account of Shadrach Kees is a case in point. Kees

was an enterprising townsman, who owned a sloop (*The Humbird*) in partnership with James Brown and Captain Jabez Bowen. In October, 1730, *The Humbird*, Richard Waterman, master, came home with a cargo of flour, from a voyage to New York. In November of that year James Brown's ledger reads:—

|  |          |
|--|----------|
|  | 6. 10. 9 |
| Nov. 25 to an oar and rum Shadrah Keis is du |          |
| for  | o. 7. 3  |
| and to stoaring of a Cabbil and . . .        |          |
| for neir a yeir                              | o. 3. 0  |
| to his sloop Lieing at my whorfe             | o. 5. 0  |
| to his sloop Lieing at my whorfe             |          |
| after he Borte my parte and his              |          |
| going onto the whorfe with Cartes            | o. 10. 0 |
| Ct to the aBove sd Keis for the youse        |          |
| of his parte of the sloop humbord            |          |
| to fecth from the sloop febbey               |          |
| [ <i>Phæbe</i> ] . . .                       | o. 5. 0  |
| and to deto to goin to Newporte              | o. 5. 0  |
| and to the youse of an old Cabbil to         |          |
| mak the sloop febbey faste with              | o. 2. 0  |

Buying and selling, whether over the counter, or "as per invoice," by no means exhausted James Brown's business resources. He had as many ways of turning an honest penny as the traditional "hired man" could have invented for the solution of a problem in practical mechanics. Brown lent money at interest, carried on a slaughter-house business, rented either horse or scow as occasion served, provided quarters for storage, and drove a thriving trade

with his distillery, — not to mention the crowning venture of his mercantile career in sending the pioneer slave-ship from the port of Providence to the Guinea Coast. His interests in the shipping trade were more important than all his other pursuits combined, and assuredly they possess far more interest for us of to-day.

We watched Captain James himself sail out of Narragansett Bay, bound for Martinique, in 1727. No doubt he shared in many a West-Indian venture of which there is no record before the year 1731, when we next find him definitely mentioned in connection with a voyage to the Caribbees, made by the sloop *Humbird*, under Richard Waterman. Only a few years more have slipped by when we find "Brother Obadiah" acting as captain on one of these West-Indian craft, while "Brother James" is giving sailing orders, and figuring on expenses and profits. Obadiah Brown, born in 1712, was number eight in a family of ten children. There was a difference of fourteen years between him and "Brother James," the oldest of that goodly assemblage of olive-branches. A warm attachment existed between the two. On James's death, at the early age of forty-one, it was Obadiah who acted the part of counselor and father to his four younger sons, the oldest of whom was but ten years, and the youngest seven months old. Obadiah is said to have sailed on his first cruise in 1733, in the sloop *Dolphin*. The inval-

uable ledger tells us that he was at sea in 1734, for he is specifically charged for

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| ospitel money for his voig to the weste indes |            |
| 5½ months                                     | 0. 13. 0   |
| To his parte of damig dun a squairsall        | 13. 0      |
| to Cloath mohair and Bottens                  | 2. 16. 3   |
| Ct to sd Obadiah Brown for wagis on Bord      |            |
| the sloop marey as pr portridg Bill 5½        |            |
| months at £3 10s.                             | £19. 05. 0 |

In the spring of 1735, Obadiah, then a young man of twenty-three, sailed again for the West Indies, with a cargo of horses, flour, and tobacco. On March 30 he wrote from "St Estasha," —

LOVING BROTHER

After my duty to Mother and Love to my brothers and Sister and all my friends hoping thes will find you all in helth as I am at this present — I have ben Disappointed of my expecttacion I secured no molasses before the twenty forth of this month. I have now fifty hhds onbord at five stivers pr galond but I hope to git the rest for les . . . horses and tobaco is in good demand . . .

So I remain your loving Brother

OBADIAH BROWNE

A year later elaborate preparations were making in Providence for a cruise involving far greater responsibilities. The "Sloop *Mary*, John Godfrey, Master," was fitting for a voyage of nearly twelve months' duration to the ill-famed Guinea Coast. Among sundry bills, still carefully fastened with the round-headed pins of the eighteenth century to the

leaves of James Brown's "Ledger," is the account of Thomas Harding, blacksmith, for "ironwork dun for the Genne Slupe," in the spring of 1736. He furnished an extraordinary assortment of spikes, large and small, "a Scuttle bar and 2 Stapels," weighing together between eight and nine pounds, "a hach bar" of nine pounds weight, and lastly, the sinister item, "35 pare of handcoofs." Nor must we fail to include among the enumerated preparations the drum, purchased of Elisha Tillinghast for "Three pounds Cash . . . To Go in the Marey to Ginne."

In the absence of any indication to the contrary we may assume that the *Mary* was loaded with the usual cargo of rum, an article always in demand in the African market, and readily procured in Providence, where molasses for the distilling trade was imported as early as 1684. James Brown himself owned two stills, and the skill of Rhode-Island distillers was such that they were popularly said to make a gallon of rum from each gallon of molasses consigned them. The usual proportion was ninety-six gallons of rum for one hundred of molasses.

Obadiah's position on board the *Mary* was that of "factor," that is, the management of sales and purchases was in his hands. He had a one-eighth interest in the sloop and her cargo, and it is to him — and not to Captain Godfrey — that James writes in March, 1737, as follows: "Loveing brother, I rec'd yours dated the 25th of November; wherein you say you



[are] come to a poor market." Obadiah was by no means alone in this account of the conditions prevailing on the slave coast. In the same season letters from Newport captains declare that "there never was so much Rum on the Coast at one time before . . . slaves is very scarce: we have had nineteen sails of us at one time in the Rhoad, so that those ships that used to carry pryme slaves off is now forsed to take any that comes."

Far from being daunted by bad news of the market, James philosophically remarks, —

But you are all well, which is good news, for health in this world is better than welth, you wrote Something Concerning your Mother, these may informe you that She died about two Months after you Sailed, and I hope She is now more happy than either of us are we being burthened with this world and She at rest as I hope. after this I would tell you . . . by all means make dispatch in your business if you cannot Sell all your Slaves to your mind bring some home I beleive they will Sell well, gett Molasses if you can, and if you Cannot come without it, leave no debts behind upon no Account, gett some Sugar & Cotten if you Can handily, but be Sure make dispatch for that is the life of trade

JAMES BROWNE

These words of wisdom and counsel were sent to meet "Obadiah Browne Merchant" at the West-Indian market whither the slaves were taken for sale, and the sloop loaded with a second cargo for the Providence trade. They were acted upon with that

zeal and accuracy which marked Obadiah's business career. By the twenty-sixth of the following May, James Brown was offering the *Mary's* cargo to his customers in the back country, in these terms: "Sr. if I Remember Rite you deziared me to Right you a few Lines at the Arivol of my Gineman. theas may informe you that she is Arived and you may have A slave if you Cum or send Befoar they are Gon I have solte plentey if you want and sevorall other Sortes of Goods if you desaine [design] downe you Cannot Be two soon."

In a statement of accounts, dated 1737, and entitled a "Settlement between Obadiah & myself," signed by James Brown, there is set down, with a careful detail and great precision, sufficient of the minutiae of the sloop *Mary's* "present Voyage too & from Guenia" to enable us to fill up the remaining gaps without overtaxing our imagination. Evidently the rum was taken to Africa, and there bartered for negroes, — men, women, and children. The slaves were carried to the West Indies and sold, while the proceeds were invested in Jamaica or St. Croix rum, powder, salt, cordage, guns, coffee, Osnaburghs, and duck; — nor must we omit the "three Slaves that he brought home being £120." Obadiah had one-eighth interest in profits and losses, and received his wages as agreed by contract. The estimated value of the cargo finally unloaded at the wharf of "Brother James" is £2601. 16. 10.

Figures speak for themselves, even if they occasionally speak for those who figure, and in the face of the above-mentioned estimate, we cannot wonder that the old sea-captain sent out his promising brother in the following year as “Master of the Sloop Rainbow,” a vessel of eighty tons burden, built for James Brown by Roger Kinnicutt, at his shipyard on the West Side of the Great River, a little east of the present Dorrance Street.

On a mild winter's day in February, 1738, Captain Obadiah dropped down Providence River, under orders running somewhat as follows: “I.ly to make what dispatch possable you can to Newport, and there take of George Gibbs your bread for your Voiage and gett some hay and other Materials for the Voiage, and then make the best of your way to Barbadoes — Speak with no Vessell on your passage if you can help it; when you are Arrived, do with your Cargoe as you think will be most to my Advantage, if you think best Sell there, and if not goe Else where, be Sure to Keep your Selfe in your right mind if possable, if any Misfortune Attend you lay it not to heart, but Consider that there is a higher power that Governs all things, and if you are likely to meet with good fortune consider the same: and possibly those two thoughts may keep you in a medium as all men ought to be: you must not charge me but five pr Cent Sales & two & halfe Returns,” continues the worthy elder brother, dropping his rôle of mentor somewhat

summarily; "you must bring me an Accompt how you Sell each Article too and for how much." And he comes to the gratifying conclusion that "in doing as near as possible you can to my directions I make no doubt but the heavens will bless you in your proceedings."

A month later the *Rainbow's* captain sent word from St. Eustatius that he had sold "nothing but my Candels and them at a very low rate," and that, in his dissatisfaction with the state of the market, he had "a Design to try for Martinnecko," where the recent destruction of "the town at St peairs" by fire had created a great demand for lumber. Obadiah had laid his hands on all that was available, nearly thirty thousand feet. "If I Stay hear," he writes, "or at any of the English Islands I shall not do that as You Sent me for: that is to gett Money": and a few lines further on, — "it is thought that the french trade will soon be opened. I shall taeck as much Cair of your Bisines as Posibel I can and if I Dont light of no misfortin I shall make you a good voige; for I have a good prospect at present, but you have all ways had Misfortin in this Vessel which Maeks me afraid, but . . . If I Should never Venter nothing I Should never have nothing."

In view of these sentiments, and of the lumber market awaiting him at Martinique, we are not surprised that the young skipper did not wait for the French trade to be opened by decree or by interna-

tional agreement, but, having satisfied himself by personal arrangement with the authorities there of the security of his vessel, announced in a postscript that he was "a going to Marteneck to load." Incidentally he mentions the presence of several Providence captains in his vicinity. Christopher Smith was at St. Martin's, John Crawford and John Field at Antigua, Sam Gorton at St. Kitt's. These young sea-dogs are all entered in James Brown's ledgers as "du" to rum, molasses, salt, and other staple commodities.

Christopher Smith was not improbably at this time disposing of a cargo representing James Brown's interests as well as his own. The statement of his voyage to "the weste indes" in 1733 is duly entered on the ledger, and shows his proportion of responsibility for ship supplies, wear and tear, and hospital money, — as also that he delivered in part payment thereof nineteen hundred and fifty-five pounds of tobacco.

Captain John Field died at St. Eustatius, precisely one month from the date of Obadiah's letter. In 1736 he had taken the *Rainbow* to Surinam for James Brown, on her maiden voyage. When ashore he patronized the shop, buying rum, board-nails, writing-paper, sugar, garlits, and arumborges, as well as hay, oats, and a "holtor to fit out his horse." His personal possessions included 818½ gallons of molasses, 434 gallons of rum, "4 Pistols of Gold,"

and a quarter interest in the sloop *Merigold*, — a name pleasantly suggesting the well-known flower, marigold, but in reality a colloquial corruption of *Mary Gould*.

Sam Gorton, too, appears in James Brown's books in 1736, as master of the schooner *Ann*, the first instance noted of a vessel larger than a sloop hailing from Providence. It would be interesting to know if Obadiah's luck at Martinique broke the charm of "misfortin" which appeared to attend the *Rainbow*. Her maiden trip to Surinam, with John Field as master, was marred by the loss of part of her return cargo of molasses.

Before sending her out again, James Brown sold one-eighth interest in her to Captain Abraham Angell. A cargo was then shipped to St. Eustatius, with Captain Angell as master of the vessel. But once in the West Indies, the attractions of that balmy clime proved so potent that the Rhode-Islander lingered, regardless of that "dispatch which is the life of trade." He dallied so long as completely to exhaust the patience of his partner and employer, and to bring down upon himself a burst of righteous indignation. "I would have you Cum directly home upon site heiroy with what you Can Gett and Wate no Longer on aney accounte," wrote James Brown. Not only were his words to the point, but they were reinforced with all the majesty of the law. By the same ship a letter to his correspondent in St. Eustatius

carried with it a power-of-attorney, and succinct directions to the effect that if Captain Angell would not listen to reason he should be called "to ann a Counte and put in his mate . . . master and send the vesil directly home." This was done, and a voyage to Barbadoes intervened before the *Rainbow* carried Obadiah to the Spanish Main. But it is evident that her reputation was none of the best. Her owner refers to her as "the unlokey sloop," but does not appear inclined to take many chances on her market value, since he forthwith states "the price of her as she Cums now in" at fourteen hundred pounds.

The last of Obadiah's sea-letters was written at Surinam, in June, 1739, two months and more after the death of the "loveing Brother" to whom it was addressed. It is not improbable that this was Obadiah's last voyage. His business interests at Providence were already far from inconsiderable, and to the care of his own wife and child was now added that of his brother's fatherless sons. From this date we may think of him snugly ensconced in his home on the Towne Street, a little north of the "Parade," as our Market Square was already styled. The career of ship-master passed in appropriate succession to his nephew James, the oldest of his brother's five boys, and a lad of fifteen in 1739, at the time of his father's death. If we may be guided by our newly acquired experience of the characteristics of the Brown family, we shall be justified in putting the younger James

a float almost as soon as he enters the foreground of this nautical sketch. We know that he was in command of his own sloop in 1748.

There is still to be seen in the John Carter Brown Library the atlas which James Brown "Bought in Boston . . . pris £10. 10." This valuable addition to the ship's furniture is in reality the fourth volume of a London publication entitled, *The English Pilot . . . Describing The West India Navigation, from Hudson's Bay to the River Amazon*, showing a breadth of geographical definition worthy of the great Columbus himself. Probably it accompanied its owner on the tempestuous coasting-trip he has described for the edification of his brother, in a letter addressed to

Mr. Nicholas Brown  
Distiller in  
Providence  
Rhoad island

and dated from Newbern, North Carolina, in February, 1749:—

We have under gon many hardships and Difculties Which I shall give you a few of the Peticulers But to Whrite the Whole It Would take a quire of Paper. I had a Passage of thirty one days . . . I Lay two Part of twenty four days With Such Gales of Wind that It Is Impossibel to Exspres Beat and toar my Sails and Riging more than I should have Dun In Six months moderate Wether. the Vessel Sprung A Leak the second Night after I came out and Continewed the Whole Passage So that Wee had a smart Spel at a pump Every half hour . . . there Is Vessels hear that have had



30-35 and 40 and 45 Days Passage and Vessels are Lucked for that have Been out of Boston and York six and seven Weeks; . . . markets Are Very Bad So that our Goods Will Not fetch the firs Cost and theirs dearer and scarcer than Ever they Was Known. . . . Remember my harty and obedient Respect to my dear mother Brothers and Sister Likewise to Unkel Elisha.

In September of the following year Captain James Brown left Providence in "the good Sloop *Freelove*" for Maryland, with a cargo of rum, molasses, sugar, salt, pork, beef, etc., on account and risk of "Obadiah Brown and Company." It proved to be his last voyage. He died in York, Virginia, on the fifteenth of the following February.

Obadiah Brown and Company appeared among the shopkeepers of Providence in 1750. The goods which stocked their well-filled shelves were brought from London in the good ship *Smithfield*, and the filial affection of nephew Moses led him to preserve his uncle's invoice "as the Beginning of his Shop Keeping." It fills three closely written folio pages. With the advent of this well-known firm we come to a time when the economic atmosphere of Providence had become fairly well permeated with an enlivening sense of the advantages of the shipping-trade.

Obadiah's "Loveing Brother" James was obliged to face several competitors during the latter years of his business career. In the forties, a more varied stock in trade was offered to the Providence public. In 1741, Stephen Dexter's estate consisted in large

part of an interesting assortment of shop-goods. The local demand for books was met by "2 salters and 3 Primmers," and three Testaments. Besides the standard woollens and linens we find gloves, garters, ribbon, bobbin, pins, "10 paier of specttacles," handkerchiefs, knitting-needles, scissors and shears, ink-cases and writing-paper, as well as padlocks, "Thum Latches," brimstone, alum, copperas, allspice, nails of varied sizes, rice, and fishhooks. Stephen Dexter should awaken the interest of the good people of Providence for other than purely commercial reasons. He married the daughter of Ebenezer Knight, also a thriving shopkeeper, on the West Side of the Great River. It was in Ebenezer's "Calashe" that the Reverend Eleazer Wheelock was privileged to enter the unregenerate town of Providence in that year of theological unrest, 1741. From the union of the Knight and Dexter families was descended that somewhat eccentric philanthropist, Ebenezer Knight Dexter, whose sayings and doings enlivened many a neighborly chat for a later generation.

As a rule, and perhaps as a matter of course, the families of those men who followed the sea lived in a more comfortable way, and were provided more generously with articles of display and luxury, than was the family of the average husbandman or mechanic. The captain of a sailing-vessel, or even the less pretentious person described as "mariner," could

almost invariably show a greater supply of household furniture, and that of better quality, than would be found in the homes of his neighbors whose ideas, as well as their several callings, were purely local in scope. In the later thirties of the eighteenth century we find tables distinguished as square, oval, and round. "High-back" chairs appear. One well-to-do "mariner" left a "Cannister of Tea" of one pound, ten shillings value, and two "flowered Bottles." Four years later we find that ancient mariner, Captain Abraham Angell, of the *Rainbow*, possessed of "Chinia Tea Cups and Plates," and a large assortment of "Chinia Punch Bowls." In the adjoining cupboard were ten silver spoons, glass beakers and wineglasses, and a teapot. His well-stocked kitchen-closet could also boast two "Coffe mills." A neighbor's sideboard was resplendent with "six Tea spoones & Tongs & strainer." These, together with "2 Large silver spoones," were estimated at £9, and their owner was likewise the proud proprietor of a tea-kettle.

With the forties another family noted in the annals of the merchant-marine of Providence comes to the front. Stephen Hopkins was interested in "ventures" on the high seas, and held shares in vessels both here and in Newport before he became a resident of Providence. In 1735, he with four other owners sent "the good Sloop called *John*" to Barbadoes "or Else where," with a cargo of horses,

boards, shingles, hoops, staves, water hogsheads, beef, pickled fish, tallow, and four pigs. Stephen's brother, John Hopkins, was master of the vessel and her assorted cargo, with which he was to do as he should "Think fitt for the best advantage of the Owners."

In 1737, Stephen was judiciously investing in the West-Indian market through the agency of Captain James Brown, who was buying and selling molasses on account and risk of S. Hopkins. Of his five sons, four were sailors, and three of the four lost their lives amid the perils of the deep. Rufus, the Judge Hopkins of later years, was a sea-captain of the fifties. John sickened of smallpox in Spain, while cruising from one port to another with whatever cargo of freight was nearest at hand. He died there at the age of twenty-four, and his body was refused Christian burial as being that of a heretic, without the pale of the Church.

Silvanus was cast away on the Nova Scotia coast, and murdered by Indians. George, the youngest of the family, has left us an account of his experiences when — a boy of nineteen — he accompanied his uncle Esek, then in command of the brigantine *Providence*, on a privateering expedition to the South Seas. In January, 1758, George wrote from Jamaica to his friend Moses Brown in Providence. Moses was the elder of the two by three years. He had no small share of that business sagacity so prominent in

PORTRAIT OF MOSES BROWN

Reproduced from an engraving after a drawing by  
William J. Harris.

Portrait of John Brown

Reproduced from an engraving by  
William F. Wood







his brothers, and was at this particular time interested in a "venture" to the West Indies in partnership with his cousin, Jonathan Clarke, Junior, of Newport.

George Hopkins's letter informs his friend that he is "With Capt Hopkins in a Prize that We and Capt Miller and Two other N. York Privateers Took the 24 December of *Porte Plate*." He tells with boyish exultation of the engagement, "Wich Lasted all Most Seven Hours," and reports the prize to be of 558 tons burden, "Mounts Eighteen Six Pounders and Had Seventy Men, is Loaded with 3500 Barrls. Floure 800 Ankers Brandy and a Small Quantity of Dry Goods Bound from France to the Cape," — namely, Cape François. Two months later, news is sent of the capture of a Dutch sloop, "and Retook a Schooner from Virginia Loaded with Pork."

The next report comes from the pen of the pugnacious and outspoken Abraham Whipple, well known to Revolutionary fame, who was serving in the Newport privateer *Defiance*. The Dutch sloop is sent to Providence, together with her cargo of "Shugar and Coffe," and here Whipple interrupts his enumeration of nautical adventures to send his "Complements to all the Ladys," and to announce his own determination "to Marry," on his return home. "George Hopkins is in grate Distress About his Lady," continues Whipple; and we pause to remember that George's obdurate "lady" must be the "Coson

Polly” for whom letters and messages are sent to Moses from Monte Cristo and Hispaniola. Moses’s Cousin Polly was the daughter of his Uncle Obadiah. Although Captain Whipple gives no reasons for his stated belief that George is “Most Damnable taken in With her,” it is evident that there was a rift somewhere within the lute, for the lady in question married Jabez Bowen, in 1762.

George Hopkins remained single — let us say for her sweet sake — during sixteen years. In March, 1773, he married Ruth Smith, a daughter of his father’s second wife by her first husband, Benjamin Smith. Hopkins continued a sea-captain in the service of the Browns until his tragic death, in 1775. His vessel touched at Charleston on her way home from Surinam, in August, 1775, and was never heard from after leaving that port. In the light of these events, a pathetic interest is attached to the letter sent by the aged Governor Hopkins, while in Philadelphia as a delgate to the Continental Congress of 1775, to his son George’s wife, in Providence. He wrote: —

BELOVED RUTH,

I . . . gave you an account of our journey hither. Since then I have had an ill turn . . . but am now well. Your mother has not been well for several days and is now quite poorly. I hope she will soon be better. George, I expect to have seen here but believe he has gone to South Carolina. . . . I can give no guess yet when we shall leave this place, certainly not very soon,

unless we adjourn to the Northward. . . . Give my love to all parts of the family, and respects to all who may ask after me. Should be glad to hear from you, and remain your

Affectionate Father

STEPHEN HOPKINS.

Many a sad moment must have been given to the futile wish that George had gone to Philadelphia as expected; and the weary question of a possible safe return from the South Carolina port must have often risen to the lips of the anxious watchers in Providence. When, ten years later, the Governor died, old in years and honors, he left to Ruth Hopkins, "widow of my son George Hopkins, One Thousand Dollars in Silver, being Money which belonged to him and which he Ordered that she should have." As for the other ardent mariner whom we met in the West Indies, — the doughty Captain Abraham Whipple, — we have to relate that, notwithstanding his gallant resolutions, it was three years after recording his determination to marry before he became the husband of Sarah Hopkins, a cousin of Captain George.

This digression in the interest of weddings and relationships has taken us far from the "*Brigatine Providence* at the West Caicos," on board which, in the April of 1758, George was despatching a missive to Moses Brown by the "Prizemaster of a small Duns [Danes] Sloop Which wee Took aBout Ten days ago which I Beleave Will be a Prize if the Devel

ant in the Judges.” Evidently his Majesty’s Court of Vice-Admiralty could not be implicitly trusted to condemn the property of neutrals. A postscript says: “Please to Deliver the Inclosed to your Coson Polly with safety.” Can we doubt that Moses fulfilled the request with discretion and tact?

Besides these stirring tales of war’s alarms, Moses received a letter from Cousin Jonathan Clarke, written from the observer’s rather than the warrior’s point of view, and illuminating for us certain genial aspects of Moses’ character and habits, which have been lost to sight amid the philanthropic and didactic enterprises of his later years. Says the candid Jonathan, “I am among a parcel of Romish Savages, As I may Call ’Em with safety — . . . they are a Compound of the greatest knavery in Life. . . . They would think no more of Robbing a Man of his teeth . . . Then you would to Drink a Draught of Punch if you were Dry, or kiss a Pretty girl if you had opportunity. . . . This Place has been Settled About six years [he writes from Monte Cristo]. There houses are built of Cabage trees. They have a Church, A Goal, Six pieces of Cannon for to Guard the Town, wherein there is About fifty Houses. About one Dozn Chairs in the place to sit in. They ride on Jack Asses for the most part with a saddle made of Straw.”

In May, George Hopkins writes from the “North Side of Highspanola” to report the capture of a “French Billinder [a two-masted vessel, distin-

guished by the trapezoidal shape of the mainsail] Who Wee Took Neare Cape Francis. We are Now Bound to Windward," he says, "To Pass away about Two months then I Beleave Wee Shall Come Home, to Sheare Our Prize Money," — and this he estimates at not less than ten thousand pounds sterling. And with "Complements to your Coson Polly, and all the Gentn. & Ladies," the letter was sealed, and the good ship bore to windward.

In this same spring of 1758 a brother of George Hopkins was undergoing an experience of the seamy side of privateering. Captain Rufus Hopkins, of the snow *Desire*, the oldest of Stephen's five sons, was taken by two French privateers as he "saild out of the River of Surinam," with a cargo of "One Hundred and Eighty Nine Hogsheads and Eight Tearses of Mollasses Containing 19040 Gallons Net." He and the *Desire* were sent to Martinique, but while on the way thither were retaken by the *Britannia* of Philadelphia, and sent as a prize to that port. Messrs. Tench Francis and Son, the Philadelphia correspondents of the firm of Obadiah Brown and Company, were equal to the occasion, as appears by their letter. They wrote: "we applyed to the Owners of the Privateer, and informed them we intended to claim her [the prize], and we proposed, to avoid the extortionate Duty of 6d. Stl. p Gallon, to get the Molasses privately on Shore and sell it, which they came into. The Judge of the Admiralty being luckily

out of town, has given us a fair Opportunity to our Scheme." The whole cargo was thus disposed of at two shillings fourpence per gallon. The ship must unavoidably be sold as a prize, but so far as the cargo was concerned, Messrs Francis felt that they had "Acted in this Affair as we would have done for ourselves," and indeed there is no reason to doubt it.

Still another representative of the Hopkins family was afloat in 1758, namely, Captain Christopher Hopkins, of the privateer *Prince George*. He was the son of William Hopkins, and a cousin of Stephen's two boys whose varied fortunes have just passed in review.

These years of the Old French War were piping times of privateering, and recruits for this branch of his Majesty's service were never lacking. Memories of rich prizes brought into Newport during the Spanish War of the forties were fresh in the minds of all our leading citizens. In 1745 and 1746, the lucrative career of the privateer sloop *Reprisal* awakened no little excitement in Providence. She was owned by Henry Paget (the son-in-law of the Reverend Mr. Checkley, of King's Church), Stephen Hopkins, John Mawney, John Andrews, and Christopher Lippitt, "all of Providence"; Jeremiah Lippitt and Joseph Lippitt, of Warwick, and Eliphalet Dyer, of Windham, Connecticut.

In 1745 she brought in a brigantine which sold at auction for £1324, old tenor. In the following year

the *Reprisal* and another vessel captured the Danish sloop, *Young Benjamin*, of forty tons burden. The sloop was "Bermuda built," and valued at £2500. Her cargo of cocoa, hides, tallow, rum, and some £3200 in gold pistoles, Spanish dollars, and pieces of eight, amounted to £15,257. The owners protested in vain that they were citizens of a neutral state (Denmark), and guiltless of carrying aid or comfort to the declared enemies of the English king.

While the trade of the "private men of war" could show so profitable a balance-sheet as this, it is hardly strange that defenders of the British flag in the service of his Majesty's Navy were with difficulty obtained. Bitter and loud were the complaints of British commanders anent the inefficiency of the colonial recruiting-service, and drastic indeed were their remedial measures. The experience of John Brown, number three of the "four brothers," was by no means unique. He was on board the sloop *Charming Molly*, as she made her way up the Delaware River, one bright morning in late September, 1758, when the occurrence took place which he records in his *Journal* in these words: "at 12 Came by a 20 Gun Ship Man of War below Ridg Island, the Man of Wars boat Came on bord and pressed Nathl Smith Notwithstanding all Could be Yoused to hender itt." Even with resources such as this at command, able-bodied seamen were so hard to get that many a warship put out to sea short-handed. In the privateering service,

however, the combination of possible wealth and certain adventure and excitement proved an allure-ment sufficiently powerful to induce almost every young man of enterprise in the colony to ship for one or more voyages. Not improbably Captain Whipple's postponement of his long-desired wedding-day was owing to the fact that his privateering ventures did not allow him sufficient time ashore to complete the necessary preparations. We read that in one year alone (1759-60) this dauntless commander captured twenty-three prizes.

Another interesting sea-captain, privateersman, and merchant was Esek Hopkins, the younger brother of Stephen, and the first commander of the American Navy. It would be difficult to say just when young Esek Hopkins left his father's home at Scituate. He must have made an early start in life surely, for in 1741 we find him already identified as of Providence. In January of that year he received a letter of marque as captain of the privateer sloop *Wentworth* of ninety tons burden, in which capacity he was authorized to "subdue seize & take . . . the men of war, Ships & other Vessels . . . belonging to the King of Spain."

In November this young privateersman of twenty-three was back in Newport, where he went ashore long enough to be married to Mistress Desire Burrough, of that pleasant little town. The following January saw him once more on board the *Wentworth*,



and not improbably the tale of his prowess and the resulting prizes would rival that of the *Reprisal*, already mentioned, were it but possible to lay one's hands upon it.

At all events, by the time the Spanish War drew to a close, Esek Hopkins was in possession of a sum of ready money. In 1747 he is to be found taking an active part in the real-estate transactions of the town of Providence. He purchased some of the Field land, a little south of the Towne Wharf, on both sides of the Towne Street, thus securing a warehouse lot, and a site for a dwelling-house. In 1750 he was fairly established, and keeping store, as is proved by his admirably kept book of accounts, marked "Ledger A." On the first half-dozen leaves are entered purchases by such well-known citizens of Providence as Stephen Hopkins, Elisha Brown, George Taylor, Daniel Jenckes, and Ephraim Bowen.

The future commodore supplied his customers with tea, "Dammask," sugar, coffee, molasses, and rum, of course; sets of "House brushes," whalebone, "mozzelin, brown Holland," bed-tick, and "flowerd [flowered] Sacques," as well as spices of various sorts, raisins, and starch. Playing-cards were in great demand. His is the first shop where "child's toys" find a place among the items of the bills rendered. That its proprietor prospered in well-doing is attested by the fact that before long his house on the Towne Street was built, and in 1751 we find him

paying a bill of £97. 6. 0 for "painten my houss the Inside." This house occupied the present site of the Providence Institution for Savings, on South Main Street. The business of shopkeeper was more often than not combined with that of ship-owner in those days of all-round men of affairs, and Esek Hopkins added to these callings the business of maritime insurance. Daniel Jenckes was charged three per cent for insuring the schooner *Smithfield* for five hundred pounds. Stephen Hopkins insured the snow *Two Brothers* on the same terms. Esek was himself part owner in several vessels, and willingly received from his customers the flour, rum, tobacco, and molasses with which much of their indebtedness was discharged, and doubtless loaded the sloop *Two Sisters* therewith for many a coasting-voyage. But with the declaration of war against the French the possibility of rich prizes made the profits of the coasting-trade seem pitifully small, and the old sea-captain lost no time in procuring his letter-of-marque and getting under way.

The declaration of war was proclaimed at Providence on August 26, 1756. On January 30, 1757, amid loud cheers of excitement and exultation from the townspeople, the prize snow *Desire* was brought into Providence Harbor. Her cargo of dry goods, earthenware, oil, butter, wine, salt, tar, nails, bricks, iron, tiles, and other commodities was valued at £78,000. One half of this went to her four princi-

SCENE IN A PUBLIC HOUSE IN SURINAM,  
ABOUT 1769

After a painting by John Greenwood, reproduced in Field's *Esek Hopkins*. The two figures on the further side of the round table are Nicholas Cooke, later governor of the colony, smoking a long pipe and engaged in conversation with Esek Hopkins.







pal owners, namely, Nicholas and John Brown, Simeon Hunt, and Esek Hopkins. The remainder was "halved down"; that is to say, the next largest owner received one half of it, and the remainder was again divided in the same way. This process was continued until a thirty-second part of the cargo's value was arrived at, and the last two stockholders divided that equally. Each man of the crew received £354. 10. 10. The snow was put up at auction, and sold to Nicholas Tillinghast and Company. Two years later, with Esek's nephew, Rufus Hopkins, on board as captain, she again figured in a prize-case at Philadelphia, and there, too, she was sold "at public Vendue."

Scarcely had the townspeople ceased to haunt the wharf where the prize lay, and to quote the prices given from day to day as her cargo was bid in slowly, when another capture appeared, and one of such astounding richness that the *Desire* was well-nigh forgotten. The snow *Seven Brothers*, loaded with coffee, sugar, and cotton, to the value of £93,000 net, had lowered her colors to the gallant Captain Esek, who brought her into port in the late February of 1757. Nicholas and John Brown were appointed by Judge Lightfoot, of the Court of Vice-Admiralty at Newport, to act as agents to unload and take charge of the cargo, and render an account of the same. Each man's share of this prize came to £422. 14. 6. With facts such as these fresh in their minds we can

well understand that the naval service of Great Britain would offer few attractions to the stalwart seamen of Narragansett Bay. The captains and crews of the condemned prizes were boarded among the townspeople of Providence, or furnished with accommodation at one of the inns. Two were quartered at the inn of Luke Thurston, near the west end of the Great Bridge. When an opportunity offered, they were shipped home to Antigua, and their hotel-bills were settled by the colonial treasurer, no doubt under the item of "military disbursements."

With the cessation of hostilities in 1763 the legalized pirate became once more an avowed outlaw. Many of the colonial privateers were readily transformed into normally law-abiding traders. The qualifying adverb is, however, susceptible of a broad interpretation, for "A little smuggling now and then Was relished by the best of men." An especial impetus was given to the slave-trade as commerce once more resumed the beaten paths of ocean traffic. During the war the French privateers had virtually driven all colonial vessels from the African coast. In January, 1759, when the fortunes of the French were at their height, Tench Francis writes from Philadelphia to Obadiah Brown and Company that he can place insurance on their schooner *Wheel of Fortune*, William Earl, master, "to the Windward Coast of Africa while on the Coast and back to providence," for a premium of twenty-five per cent. In



the previous year (1758) the rate had been eighteen per cent.

With peace the old conditions were restored, and the "Guineamen" speedily became a favorite investment. Foremost among the many who hastened to cultivate this profitable field of industry was the firm of Nicholas Brown and Company. In the course of a long business letter to "Collector Carter Braxton In Virginea on Pamunkey River," written in the early September of 1763, the prospects of the Providence firm are touched upon as follows: "You Mention of being Concern'd in the Guine Trade and that the Vessels Return with the negrows to your place. As We Shall be Largely Concern'd in Navigation this Fall wick will bring mello. in the Spring and we Liveing in a place wair we Can procure a Large Quantity of Rum Distilled Amediately, its Very Likely if it's Agreeable to you to be Concerned that we May Fitt a proper Vessill for Guiney in the Spring."

In view of the fact that tobacco as well as rum had proved acceptable on the slave-coast, and that the Virginia product was justly prized in all quarters of the globe, Nicholas then asks to be advised whether his correspondent "Could Send a Quantity of Tobacco Clear of Duty by our Vessill, if it Comes to your Address this Winter, and at what price";—whereby we may note, in passing, the advantage of dealing directly with the Collector, for if there were

ways and means to evade the export tax, we may rest assured that the intelligent Braxton was not the man to be caught napping on so important an official detail.

No record has thus far appeared of any ship sailing to "Guiney" on account and risk of the Brothers Brown, in the spring of 1764. But in the fall of that year, the senior member of the firm wrote from his Providence counting-house to his brothers, John and Moses, then at Newport, where that good seaman, Esek Hopkins, was busily engaged in fitting out the brig *Sally* for a voyage to the African coast. His letter — at once shrewd, cautious, diplomatic, and with a keen appreciation for detail — is so characteristic of the writer that it is worth quoting at some length.

Providence Sepr. 12, 1764.

Messrs. Jos. Jno. & M. Brown

GENTL.

. . . Jno. Jenckes asks 6/ for his Tobacco perhaps it might be got of the Judge at less [Jonathan was the writer's brother-in-law and the son of the Judge], tho' making him an Offer while at Newport may put him in Mind of selling it in Newport where it's much wanted for the Guineamen. . . . Inquire of Malbone whither there Brigg Caried Any Qy. Onions — if they did not it may be worth while to get 100 bshl. more at Bristol. . . . I beleave that if a Stroke was put in the Newport paper Truly giving a State of the Rum Trade upon the Coast of Guinea it may prevent Menny Vessels from Pushing that way this fall, this is a Subject worth our Attention. a Small matter as 2 dols. will get

it from the Newport into the Boston & York Papers, or Phila.

NICH. BROWN

This was in September. With the middle of the following May came news of Captain Hopkins's whereabouts. He was "up the River gamby," and reported "all well on bord." A month later, however, Benjamin Mason, of Newport, an old correspondent of the Browns, wrote them of news just brought by a ship's captain who was "at Basue and saw Cap Hopkins about the begining of march." This har-binger of woe announced that "Hopkins had Lost all his hands & had sent a Craft to the Goviner of Gam-bia for Assistance he had about 40 Slaves," to which statement the Newport letter-writer added a word of commentary: "Basue is a portugese place," he explained, "and they are not Allowd to go on shore or on board each others Vessels without paying a Great Custom, wch I suppose the Reason hopkins did not right [write]."

The Newport firm of Joseph and William Wanton, whose social, political, and commercial relations with the Browns were close and constant, wrote at once to offer sympathy and such consolation as the nature of the case might admit: "We heartily Condole with you on the bad News from Hopkins. had he proceeded down to Anamaboe it would have been no better with Regard to Trade, there was the 26th April 17 Sail there of Europeans & Rum men, & the

latter could not get a Slave at any Price. 750 Hhds. Rum in the Road & the Castle [i.e., trading-station] full besides." From which facts it would seem that the newspaper item contemplated by Nicholas had not materially affected the volume of business.

It appears that Rumor viewed Captain Hopkins's brig with magnifying-glasses of abnormal power; when direct news of the ship and cargo reached her owners, they in turn wrote to our old friend, Captain Abraham Whipple, then at Surinam; "Capt. Esek Hopkins wass in the River Gambe the 17th May with 75 Slaves on bord. he had been Very well him Self had Lost one Man & Three Others Sick, the Rest all well. had Sufferd greatly in Leakage of his Cargo haveing upwards of 20 hhd. Rum Out, he wrote he wass in hopes of Sailing off the Coast in 2 or 3 Months." This letter was written in the last days of July, when news of the brig might be looked for at any time. Her arrival at Antigua concluded the tale of bad luck. Many negroes were lost on the passage, and such as reached that port were sold at low prices in a dull and heavy market.

In this instance, as in that of the sloop sent to Africa in 1736, we are led to the conclusion that the profits of the venture were disappointing. At the time of the voyage of 1736, the slave-trade was conducted without system or method. There were as yet no trading-stations at which a cargo might be secured, and regular communication with the interior

maintained. The voyage to the African coast was made in from six to ten weeks, but there was no assurance that slaves could be secured at once, and a tedious stay of months to await a cargo was entirely subversive of that "dispatch," on which our pioneer merchant so strenuously insisted.

James Brown found a more satisfactory profit in his West-India molasses and his New-England rum. He drew on Massachusetts and Connecticut as well as Rhode Island for his cargoes of provisions and lumber. "Fat cattle" were driven down to the head of Narragansett Bay from Worcester and Uxbridge, and from the Connecticut towns of Plainfield, Killingly, and Pomfret. Boards, shingles, staves, and hoops were collected from Taunton and Greenwich. Butter was brought in from the back country, and from Newport. The farmers from Warwick furnished tobacco, while those at Pawtuxet brought beef packed in the barrel. Hemp was obtained from his more immediate neighbors. Candles, too, were home-made. Horses were picked up whenever a good opportunity offered at prices varying from ten to twenty gallons of rum. They were an essential factor in the trade to the Dutch West-Indian colonies, for that profitable market was opened to the English on the explicit condition that they should bring down horses for the use of the Dutch sugar-planters. Many a tight little sloop, laden with a judicious assortment of horses, candles, dried fish, cheese, and lumber,

made three or four trips a year to the "Weste Indes." Later, onions and oysters were added to the list of standard articles.

As we follow the mercantile career of Obadiah Brown, and of his nephews the "four brothers," it becomes apparent that their interest in the slave-trade was a minor factor in the extension of their prosperity. It is true that they sent the schooner *Wheel of Fortune* to the windward coast of Africa, in March, 1759, when insurance was at twenty-five per cent premium, — a fact which would argue well for the proportion of profit expected. When, however, after the treaty of peace with France, Hopkins took the *Sally* out to the Guinea Coast, he found there precisely the same conditions that had hampered Obadiah Brown thirty years earlier. We can hardly doubt that his voyage was a disappointment to his owners.

There were certain reasons, too, why the Brothers Brown were peculiarly well contented with their business enterprises close at hand. Already their "Sperma Ceti Works" at Tockwotton had gained an enviable reputation, and their candles were shipped far and wide, in ever-increasing quantities. In 1765, Hope Furnace was put in operation, and only three years later the firm of Nicholas Brown and Company was sending pots, kettles, and ash-pans to Nantucket, New York, Norwich, and other coast towns, and even to Dominica and Tobago. It seems evident

that their busy distilleries supplied the “Guineamen” of their old friends the Wantons, and other Newport merchants, and that their own shipments consisted ever more largely of those local manufactures whose excellence soon secured for them a wide market, and whose output was controlled by the Brothers Brown and their family connections.



## Chapter VIII

### THE COLONIAL TOWN OF PROVIDENCE

**A**MONG the throngs that cross Red Bridge to-day, from the procession of milk-wagons entering the city in the early morning to the groups of golfers whose faces are turned townward at dusk, there are few who do not linger for a moment's glance up the stream of the Seekonk. Gently curving banks lined with trees are near at hand. On the left, picturesque tree-tops stand clearly defined against the sky. On the right, just at the turn of the river, a group of unsightly factories offends the eye, softened, it is true, by the enchantment of distance, yet serving to remind us anew that, save for the works of man, "every prospect pleases." Close to these tall, smoke-blackened chimneys, amid surroundings sadly at variance with its winding course through meadow and woodland, the gay little Ten-Mile River enters the broad Seekonk.

The Ten-Mile River is known and loved by us of the present day for its picturesque and shaded windings, and its apparent remoteness from the rush and turmoil of the workaday existence in the busy city across the Seekonk. Our forefathers, some two hundred years ago, saw the Ten-Mile from quite a different point of view. They came through Ferry



Lane, and crossed at the Narrow Passage for the very utilitarian purpose of visiting the stores and wharves which then lined Walker's Point, at the mouth of the little stream. There supplies were purchased in greater variety and at less cost than from the travelling peddler, or the master of a tramp sloop, whose intermittent visitations were but a poor dependence for the necessities of life. This outlying settlement of the prosperous town of Rehoboth long served as a base of supply for the farmers of Attleborough and Pawtucket, as well as for the more immediate neighbors at Providence.

With the middle of the eighteenth century there came a more comfortable state of things at home. Had we entered Providence by way of the ferry at the Narrow Passage some ten years later still, — let us say in 1759, or 1760, — and made our way thence to that centre of the town's activity, the Towne Wharf and the adjacent Parade, we should have found more than one occasion to linger for comment on recent changes and improvements.

At the extreme northern end of that well-worn thoroughfare, the Towne Street, our interest and admiration must have been excited by the imposing structure, known then as now, as "Elisha Brown's brick house." Elisha Brown was the youngest brother of the forceful Captain James. In some respects he is a pathetically interesting figure in the town's history. When in his prime, he seems to have

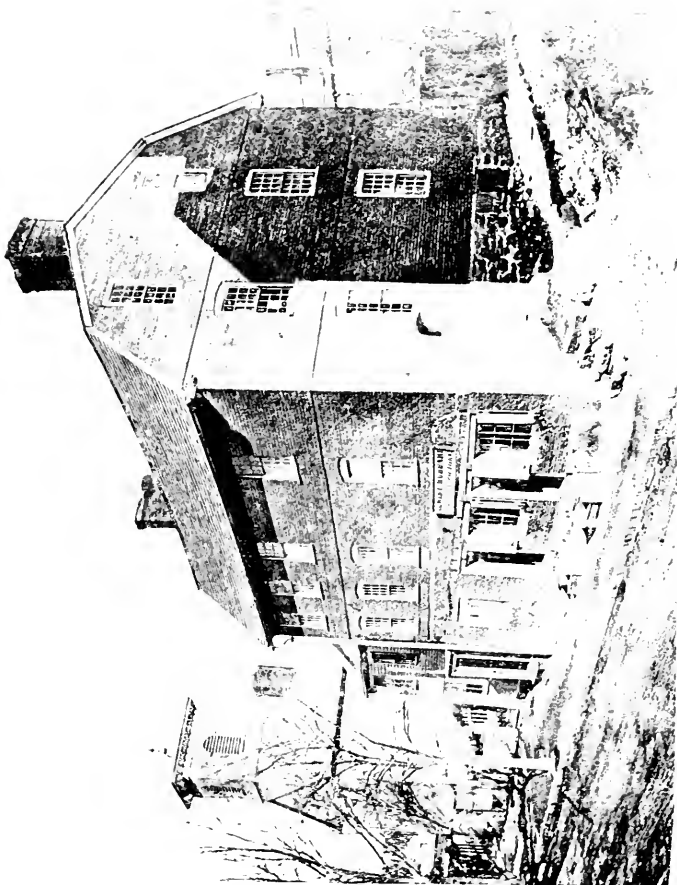
been the most active man in Providence, though far from being ultimately the most successful. Prominent both as man of business and as politician, he attained a high position in each capacity. From 1765 to 1767 he served as deputy governor of the colony. He bought and sold lands, houses, merchandise, cattle, and slaves: built grist-mills, ran the town corn-mill, and also the town poorhouse. One of his more permanent undertakings was the construction of the brick house, which still bears his name, at the North End of the Towne Street. It was built about the year 1759. The original dimensions were seventy-two by twenty-eight feet, and it was no less than four stories in height. One half of this ambitious structure is still standing, and is to-day, even as it was one hundred and fifty years ago, an object of interest to both old and young. Governor Brown's mansion-house was also on the Towne Street, a little north of Olney's Lane.

In the tax-list of 1759 for the assessment of a rate to pay for the fire-engine, Elisha Brown occupies the proud position of the town's largest taxpayer owning perishable property in the compact part of the town, subject to loss by fire. Owing to the fact that his wife inherited the town-mill from her cousin, Charles Smith, Elisha Brown became town-miller. He was responsible for keeping the mill in good condition, and was allowed to exact as toll for his services "the fourteenth Part of the Indian corn ground;

DEPUTY-GOVERNOR ELISHA BROWN HOUSE

North Main Street, north of Olney Street. Built about 1759, the first brick house in the compact part of the town of Providence. From a photograph taken in 1865, now in the Rhode Island Historical Society.







the Sixteenth of Rye, and the Eighteenth Part of Wheat."

It was the Governor's political responsibilities that proved too heavy a load. During the long Ward-Hopkins controversy, electioneering was conducted with far greater regard for the end attained than for the means employed. The free and independent voter found himself elevated to a position of commanding influence, and able to drive a correspondingly good bargain as the price of his attendance at the poll. When the traders of Providence determined to make their voice heard in the political councils of the colony, they met with an equally determined resistance. The merchants of Newport and the planters of South County were not men to relinquish their political supremacy without a struggle. When, in 1755, after a long and bitter contest, Stephen Hopkins was elected governor, the political veterans bent themselves anew to the effort to subdue once for all this intrusive upstart from the rival town on the Moshassuc. Two years of storm and stress brought a Newport candidate — Samuel Ward, of Westerly — once more to the governor's chair.

The unrestrained violence of the campaign rhetoric employed on this occasion led Stephen Hopkins to consider himself justified in bringing suit for defamation of character against the successful candidate. So unhesitatingly was the question of libel prejudged throughout the colony of Rhode Island that, in the

interests of fair play, the case was brought before a Massachusetts court. Ward was acquitted of the charge of "false and scandalous libel." The case was promptly appealed, but was put off from term to term on one pretext or another until the September of 1759, when the long-suffering judges refused to postpone further the course of justice. Hopkins thereupon withdrew his suit, having gained naught save the obligation of paying the costs, and the privilege of seeing himself, as his political opponents saw him, in the numerous and scathing broadsides issued by Ward and his supporters.

From 1757 to 1768, when both Hopkins and Ward publicly withdrew their names as candidates for the office of governor, the political battle raged unchecked. In the true spirit of an age when the home government found no argument so convincing as that of place or pension, the long-headed Englishmen of Rhode Island and Providence Plantation brought practical business methods to bear on their reading of the signs of the times. It was not from purely philanthropic motives that seventeen of the best-known and most highly respected citizens of Providence signed a "Promise to pay the Sums we here Severally freely Set to our names in Such Articles as may be the most Usefull in procuring the free Votes of the poorer Sort of Freemen in this County . . . and more particularly them Who's Surcumstances does not admit their Time, to the Injury of their Familys." Forty-four



### BROADSIDE LAMPOON

Issued by the Hopkins party in 1763 against Samuel Ward and Gideon Wanton. From a copy of the broadside in the Rhode Island Historical Society. Reduced to about half size.



## The Fall of *Samuel* the *Squomicutite*, and the Overthrow of the Sons of *Gideon*.

OW *Solomon* the Son of *Solomon* slept with his Fathers, and was buried in the Tomb of *Solomon* his Father, and *Solomon* his Son reigned in his Stead.

In those Days there was Contention in the Land of the *Pumkinites*; between *Stephen* the *Choppemiskite*, and *Samuel* the *Squomicutite*.—And the Inhabitants of *Tropwen* sent Message to *Samuel* the *Squomicutite*, saying, We will give our Daughters unto thy Sons, and take thy Sons for our Daughters, we will become as one People, and fight thy Battle against *Stephen* the *Choppemiskite*, if thou wilt come and dwell in the Land of *Tropwen*.

And *Samuel* being a weak Man, hearkened unto the People of *Tropwen*, and came and dwelt among them, at different Times, for the Space of three whole Weeks.

And *Samuel* made Affinity with *Gideon* and his Sons.—Now the Sons of *Gideon*, are *Blunderbus*, *Nimsbi*, *Testy*, and *Stubborn*, all mighty Men of Valor.

And *Samuel* said unto the Sons of *Gideon*, if you will hear my Voice, and hearken unto my Words, ye shall be great Men in the Land.

*Blunderbus* shall ride on a large grey Mare, with a Sword by his Side, and a white Wand in his Hand, and shall execute Judgment in the Land.

*Nimsbi* shall be first Ruler in *Tropwen*, with a Staff made of Hickory Wood shall he walk up and down in the Streets of *Tropwen*, before the People.

Unto *Testy* will I give my Commission, to oversee the Merchants and Traders in the Land, that their Ships shall not go forth nor come again, unless they pay Tribute unto him.

*Stubborn* your younger Brother, ye shall send forth with my Messages and my Companions, and in due Time, I will exalt him, and make him a great Man in *Tropwen*.

The Sons of *Gideon*, loving the Mammon of Unrighteousness, hearkened unto the Words of *Samuel*, and they all arose furiously on the Morrow.

And they ran unto the Hewers of Wood and Drawers of Water, and to those that use the Spade and Pick-axe; saying,—*Samuel* the *Squomicutite*, wages War against *Stephen* the *Choppemiskite*; and if ye assist not *Samuel*, we will turn ye from your Dwellings, and withhold Food and Raiment from your Children, that they shall die in the Streets.

And thus did the Sons of *Gideon*, ride on Horses and in Chariots, to and fro, up and down, in the Streets of *Tropwen*, exclaiming against *Stephen*, and oppressing the Inhabitants of *Tropwen*, for the Space of three whole Months.

*Samuel* made also a League with the Buyers and Sellers, and Money-changers, that if they would destroy *Stephen*, Root and Branch, he would give unto them the Possessions of the Poor throughout all the Land of the *Pumkinites*.

Now the *Quanketites*, *Choppemiskites*, and *Narragansetites*, liked not the Doings of *Samuel* and the Sons of *Gideon*, and they set the Battle in Array against *Samuel*, and they smote him Hip and Thigh, so that the Killed and Wounded of that Day, were dispersed throughout all the Land of the *Pumkinites*, from the Land of the Fishermen, Eastward, until thou comest to the great River *Paukituck*, Westward.

And the Battle went fore against the Sons of *Gideon*, several of them were slain, and those that remain, were sore affrighted, so that they look like fierce *Africans* besmeared with Ashes in a cold frosty Morning.

Now the Acts of the Government of *Samuel*, are neither recorded in the Book of *Samuel*, nor in the Acts of the Kings, for he said much, but did NOTHING.

Made public at *Tropwen*, as a Memorial of the Deliverance of the *Pumkinites*.



hundred pounds was the aggregate amount thus freely given for such articles as might be useful to the "poorer Sort of Freemen."

As time went on, sectional jealousy was almost lost sight of in the intense personal animosity engendered by the strife. It was no longer merchant against farmer, or Providence threatening to rival Newport. It became Hopkins against Ward. Factions appeared in towns throughout the colony, and families were divided by all the bitterness of party rancor. In Providence the Brothers Brown were among Stephen Hopkins's staunchest supporters. Their social and business connections were close and constant. Nicholas Brown and Stephen Hopkins had married cousins. Their business interests were in many respects identical, and their political views were ever sympathetic. Among their fellow-townsmen the opinions and support of the Browns and their allies carried no little weight.

Greatly to the annoyance of his four rising young nephews, "Uncle Elisha" was found among the leaders of the opposition. He appears to have taken up the cause of Ward with a zeal which probably owed some of its enthusiasm to his own position as a candidate for the office of deputy governor. A favorite centre for political news was the tavern owned by Elisha Brown. It was on the Towne Street, not far from the well-known "Turpin's," and was without doubt a potent factor in the promotion of political

enthusiasm. From its hospitable roof-tree many a delegation set forth to carry conviction to the freemen in the debatable ground of Scituate, Cumberland, and Gloucester.

The Hopkins contingent marshalled their forces with equal celerity. In the campaign of 1765, John Brown wrote Joseph Wanton, Junior, "We Shall have a hard Battle at Gloucester, their was Not Less than forty Men in town Yesterday, Freemen belonging there by Whose Return was Carried Rum Enough for a Small Guine Cargo, with Severil other Nessessarys, & Brother Moses & Jabez [Bowen] Sat off for that Town Yesterday." Wanton, although a Newport man, was among the most zealous of Hopkins's supporters, and served several terms as deputy governor, to the satisfaction of his party and himself. In spite of unwearying efforts in behalf of "the poorer sort of Freemen," Ward and Brown were the winning candidates in 1765, and again in 1766.

Elisha Brown's political career terminated with his second term of office. Although gratifying, it was costly, and the inroads made upon his estate during the vicissitudes of the campaign were such as it proved impossible to recover from. The business reverses of the next few years cast the heavy shadow of poverty over the latter part of the deputy governor's long and varied career. His petition to the Assembly, in 1770, praying for relief under the Insolvent Debtors' Act of 1756, tells in simple and con-

vincing words a truly heart-rending tale of accumulated misfortunes. He had "within the Space of about five Years lost full three Quarters of five Sail of Vessels," amounting to six hundred and twelve tons, "with three Quarters of their Cargoes." Only three of his merchantmen came safe to port during that time, and their voyages were so unprofitable that his losses amounted to £87,200, old tenor. Within the same time, four valuable negro servants died. "Also within the same Time one of his Mill Dams was carried away by a Flood, and one Mill almost over-set," the damage amounting to £1980, old tenor. "Divers Bankruptcies in the Colony" had involved him to the extent of £3872, old tenor. "Sickness and Death hath been in his Family, and besides his Affliction and Distress of Mind, he hath thereby sustained great & heavy charges."

The unfortunate man was surely justified in describing his condition as "very hard and grievous." He says that he had "used his utmost Prudence & Diligence to Obtain a decent Living for himself, and to bring up and settle his Family in the World." He has dealt "fairly and uprightly with all Men," and "makes no doubt" that his neighbors will testify to his "Diligence in Business, Fairness in Trade, and most active Endeavours to settle his Affairs." Since, as matters now stand, he "is subject to immediate Imprisonment" for debt, he "knows not of any better Way than to apply to the Assembly for Re-

lief." The so-called relief was granted. The remnants of the poor man's estate were duly inventoried, and sold at public vendue for the benefit of his creditors. Silver spoons, household stuff, and farm implements went under the hammer, as well as his three dwelling-houses in Providence, and his farm in North Providence.

While the politicians raged, and "the poorer sort of Freemen" gathered up such crumbs of comfort as were thoughtfully dispensed by their well-wishers, the average well-to-do farmer found the humdrum tenor of his way rudely disturbed by the prevalent excitement and unrest. The exploitation of Providence for the benefit of Newport was the agitating theme upon which were played many skilfully modulated variations. As the years went by, and campaigns waxed and waned, a suspicion dawned on the minds of the freemen of the back country that they in turn were exploited, greatly to the advantage of the merchants and shopkeepers on the Towne Street. The suspicion became conviction, and in the eventful year 1765, public opinion was moved to action. The state of the case was called to the attention of the General Assembly by a petition drawn up by those who dwelt "in the remote parts of the Township." The petitioners describe themselves as "near all Farmers whose Interest & Business are often times different from the Interests of the Merchants & Tradesmen in the Compact part of the Town." They



complain that town-meetings are called with unnecessary frequency, — “no less than seven last Fall in three Months time” (as a matter of fact, four are recorded), — and that the matters under consideration do not concern the farmers, “who nevertheless were then & still are obliged to leave their Business . . . to prevent any thing being Voted to their Disadvantage, which occasions much Loss of Time, great Uselessness Contention and Expense which ought to be born by the Merchants & Tradesmen in the Compact Part only.” The remedy suggested savored strongly of the “root-and-branch” policy. Let the town be divided, said the malcontents; set us apart from these “merchants and traders,” and leave them full liberty to manage their own town-meetings, vote their own improvements, and pay their own taxes.

The demand was not without precedent. Since 1722 the town “twenty miles square” of which good Doctor Humphreys wrote, had undergone a series of diminutions. In 1731 an act was passed for “incorporating the out-lands of the town of Providence into three towns,” namely, Smithfield, Scituate, and Glocester, and the improvement was formally declared to be “of great ease and benefit to the inhabitants . . . in transacting and negotiating the prudential affairs of their town, which for some time past, has been very heavy and burdensome.” Some twenty years later, the settlers in the southwest part

of the township obtained permission to become a legalized corporation under the name of Cranston. So recently as the year 1759, Johnston had entered upon a separate existence, to the west of the parent settlement.

Again, in 1765, the Assembly saw cause to grant the petition quoted, notwithstanding the protests entered on the part of "the Ancient Town of Providence," to the effect that the division had been "instigated and Set on by Crafty and designing Men . . . to Serve the Interested Views and Sinister purposes of Such instigation." Thus the town of North Providence came into being, in full possession of the usual rights and privileges, under the beneficent dispensation of Governor Ward and Deputy-Governor Elisha Brown. Its triumphal career was brief. Two years later the rival party came into power, and within a month of the investiture of Stephen Hopkins with such honors as pertained to the colony's chief executive, we find "divers Freemen of the Town of North Providence" representing that by "the late division of the Town of Providence . . . the greatest part of the Inhabitants . . . taken off" were merchants and tradesmen, and that "remaining in their present separated State, is greatly to their Disadvantage." The Assembly is, therefore, prayed to reunite to the town of Providence such portion of the town of North Providence as is "commonly called the compact part." The petition was promptly

granted. As a matter of fact, the divisionists were so eager to interpose effective obstacles in the way of the "Crafty and designing Men" of the Town Parade combination that they overreached themselves. Their division line cut the town at the present Orms Street, and went east to the Seekonk by way of Olney Street. The remedy proved worse than the disease, and the inevitable readjustment two years later moved the line north to Herrenden Lane, at about the middle of the North Burial Ground.

Even now the ravages of the division epidemic were not stayed. In February, 1770, there was a violent outbreak "in that Part of the Town of Providence, which lieth on the west side of Weybosset Bridge." The diagnosis of the case is given in a petition of great interest for its graphic account of the West Side and the conditions of life there. The number of inhabitants is estimated at twelve hundred, "among whom are at least one Hundred Freemen, — altho it is but a few Years since building Houses took Place there." The people are described as "Tradesmen chiefly . . . [who] by Diligence and Industry . . . surmounted many Difficulties to effect a Settlement. They levilled several Hills which stood in their Way, filled up sunken and low Places, laid out and made divers commodious Streets and Lanes . . . and have Reason to hope, that with a Blessing on their future Industry, they will in a few Years become Very Populous." The uneven shore-line,

with its long stretches of shoal water, offered small inducement for the settlement of the ship-owners and "merchants," — a term used here to designate the East Side magnates, — but as in course of time the East Side filled up, those who pursued "mechanic Business and Manufactures . . . sat down on the Point (called Weybosset), which altho it was in the jurisdiction of the Town, was not considered as belonging to the compact Settlement."

Furthermore, it is alleged that "Nature herself hath interposed, and divided them from the old Settlement by an Arm of the Sea . . . [and] Besides this Detachment . . . the Interests, Views, and Occupations of the Inhabitants on either Side of the Water, and their Modes of getting a Living are so distinct and different, that an united Force of the whole for the public Service, can never be expected." And here the petitioners, in sorrow rather than in anger, "beg leave to remark that they have in many Instances been aggrieved by their powerful Neighbours in the Other side of the Bridge, the Particulars whereof they forbear to mention from a Tenderness to them, and Love of that Union and Harmony which ought to be kept up in any Community." Nevertheless, all past injuries shall be overlooked, and past contentions buried in oblivion, if only "all that part of the Town of Providence lying westward of Weybosset Bridge, and the Harbour or Bay, may be incorporated into a Town, to be called and Known by

the Name of Westminster, or such other Name as the Assembly shall think fit." "Weybosset" was the name first selected for the new civic entity, but for some unknown reason, the word was carefully erased, and "Westminster" written in its stead. It seems probable that Weybosset Neck, Weybosset Point, Weybosset River, and Weybosset Bridge gave ample opportunity for confusion of terms without adding to the collection a town of Weybosset.

The petition appears to have represented a real grievance, for among its signatures are a goodly number whose owners were men of substance and position. On the other hand, some names are conspicuous by their absence. One of the best-known and most prosperous of the West-Siders was Jacob Whitman, a shopkeeper at the present Turk's Head, where Weybosset Street diverges from Westminster. Mr. Whitman was a man of sufficient prominence to be known and appreciated by the East-Side "merchants and traders." He had already served a year or two on the Town Council, where West-Side names were few and far between. Whether his experience during his term of office influenced his views respecting a town to be called Westminster, we cannot venture to say. At all events, he did not sign the petition just quoted. This document was read "in full town-meeting," and the dissenting voices were sufficiently numerous to "Resolve that the Deputies of this Town oppose to the Uttermost of their Power,

the Division of the Town . . . and that no Person shall be Elected as a Deputy . . . untill he shall Subscribe to the above Resolve." No doubt the next few months were successfully devoted to enlightening public opinion, for when the obnoxious document came up for consideration in the September session of the Assembly, it was dismissed for the reason that the petitioners "being solemnly calld to come in and enforce this Petition did not appear."

Jacob Whitman's memory is still kept green for all old residents, even as it is unconsciously perpetuated by all newcomers, in the name given to the corner where his ancient landmark, the veritable "Turk's Head," so long grimaced and frowned at the passerby. Originally the figurehead of the ship *Sultan*, whose ironwork was long supplied and renewed by Jacob Whitman, this turbaned representative of the Orient served Whitman many a year in the humble capacity of sign-post. An indefatigable investigator of problems in local history has advanced the opinion that it was not the old and original "Turk's Head," or "Sultan's Head" which was swept away in the great gale of 1815, and carried among other débris down the river, but probably a later and more grotesque street-sign, the product of local talent exerted rather to caricature than to reproduce the *Sultan's* figurehead. After the waters of destruction had subsided, the "Turk's Head" was recovered,

taken to Alabama, and once more set up in business before the shop of Jacob's grandson.

Jacob was himself a Massachusetts man. He came to Providence shortly after 1740, and established himself and his blacksmith's shop in the southern part of the town, near the Tillinghast neighborhood. In the course of four or five years he bought a "small lot" on the west side of Great Bridge, at the corner where incomers and outgoers might conveniently pause to repair a loosened horseshoe, or tighten a shaky tire. Settlers in the immediate vicinity were not numerous, but the "Snow Neighborhood" was just starting on its prosperous career, and there was a new shipyard close at hand, where Roger Kinnicutt (also of Massachusetts) was conducting a thriving business. Whitman made a specialty of furnishing ironwork for ships, and in this line he filled orders for firms so far afield as Boston, Lynn, and Salem. His "small lot" was extended by later purchases, a shop was added to the business of the smithy, a mansion-house appeared, and eventually Whitman's Block and Whitman's Corner became as universally well known as Great Bridge. An interesting item in connection with his shopkeeping is his imports from the famous shoemakers of Lynn. He received in return for his ironwork "Shoos Stamp't" and "not Stamp't," "Shoos Gloshees," "Clog-gloshees," and clogs pure and simple. The latter cost six shillings a pair.

Whitman's ledger gives ample evidence of business relations with the East-Side merchants, and of his own interests in the shipping-trade. He lived until 1802, and of his thirteen children only one survived him. This, his son Jacob made an interesting career for himself as watchmaker, ship-owner, and auctioneer. He it was who built the large brick block at Turk's Head, part of which is still standing. His somewhat checkered career may be followed in the newspaper issues of a later generation. The elder Jacob was not a man to seek his patrons through the medium of newspaper advertisements. That means of drawing trade was the resource of dealers whose sympathies were perhaps less perfectly in accord with the Brown-Hopkins-Jencks-Bowen combination of the East Side, by which local industries were directed with so much sagacity and penetration.

Among those shopkeepers who did appear in the advertising columns of the *Providence Gazette and Country Journal Containing the freshest Advices, both Foreign and Domestic*, was Samuel Nightingale, Junior, a prominent West-Sider and a highly respectable man, both prosperous and progressive. Samuel Nightingale, Senior, came to Providence from Pomfret. He was born in Braintree, of that good old New-England stock by whom wisdom was prized above riches. The boy's inheritance of this world's dross was left him on condition that his college expenses at Harvard should be defrayed from



his share of the estate. He graduated in 1734, and straightway became a preacher in the Congregational church. His budding talents were not given sufficient time to prove themselves entitled to cultivation, for the young divine's health was not equal to the arduous task he had undertaken. He went from Braintree to Pomfret, and in 1751 moved again, this time to Providence, where his sympathies were naturally enlisted in behalf of the struggling little flock who had tried in vain to rally around the standard of Josiah Cotton, and were thankfully accepting the ministrations of John Bass.

Nightingale betook himself to the West Side of the Great River, purchased a house and lot of Joseph Snow, of real-estate fame, and not only settled down in close proximity to the obnoxious "New Lights" and their still more objectionable pastor, but induced that same open-minded pastor and his father, as well as the officiating clergyman of the opposition church on the "Hill," to join him in a business venture already alluded to in these pages, — the Concord Distil-House. This *tour de force* was crowned with success from the start. No one knew better than Samuel Nightingale how to distinguish between things temporal and things spiritual. Each Sabbath morning found him shaking the dust of the Snow Neighborhood from his polished shoes with their shining silver buckles as he wended his way with Mistress Nightingale on his arm, and from three to

seven children in attendance, eastward over Weybosset Bridge and up Presbyterian Lane to the little meeting-house where the faith of his fathers was logically and theologically expounded by the Reverend John Bass.

“The Distil House Concord”—as it is termed in contemporary deeds—soon became, under Nightingale’s astute management, one of the most flourishing business enterprises in the town. Four years after the business was started, Nightingale bought out Snow’s interest, and a little later purchased that of the Reverend John Bass, thus becoming proprietor of three quarters of the property. Almost immediately the scope of the business was enlarged. Sloops were sent more frequently to the West Indies and Surinam for supplies of molasses. Customers from Newport appeared. Benjamin Mason got many a “Guine cask” filled at the Distil House Concord, as also did the notorious Simeon Potter, pirate, privateersman, and pillar of St. Michael’s Church at Bristol. Simeon Potter was a man not of action only, but of an uncompromising directness of speech. When business transactions were not to his mind his expression of disapproval was not restrained by the customary formalities of an eighteenth-century business letter. He writes to his agent in Providence: “I have been Imposed upon by Messrs. Nightingale & Sweeting in a Cruel Manner in a quantity of Rum they Sent me. It will bear no more bead than worter

& thay Refuse making it up — . . . thay Pretend the Rum was proof when thay Delivered it Which must be absolutly Forlse.”

When young Sam Nightingale, Junior, grew to manhood and developed business abilities highly creditable to his father's training, his tastes led him to engage in a different field of action. In 1762 he bought out Joseph Bennett, whose shop was situated on the West Side, in the Snow Neighborhood, about where Grace Church stands now. His father's backing obtained for him a profitable connection with certain Boston firms, who were nothing loth to extend their sphere of influence Rhode-Islandward. Nor did honest merit toil in vain. After four years of experience and profit on the West Side, sufficiently near the homestead to admit of a judicious parental oversight, young Sam aspired to take his place among the “merchants and traders” across the river. A new shop was built, and that on a scale demanding one hundred and fifty-two panes of seven by nine glass, four hundred feet of clapboards, and six hundred and thirty-five shingles; and also seven gallons of rum, — this last item judiciously distributed “to the men” by the quart, pint, half-pint, and gill, as the work progressed.

On October 11, 1766, Samuel Nightingale, Junior, was in a position to offer to the Providence public “a large assortment of English, India, and West-India Goods, at his new shop just above the Great Bridge.”

A list of the goods follows, and is all-embracing in the variety set forth, from crimson satins and chip hats, on the one hand, to gimlets, logwood, and coffee, on the other. There were no Saturday bargains in that business world. The same advertisement answered all requirements of the shop and its customers during the remainder of the calendar year. There was a comfortable certainty as to what might be bought and the price thereof. An East-Greenwich customer confidently wrote: "I send by the bearer one Dollar for which please to send one Black Barcelona Long Cravat which is Four Shillings Lawful Money, for the remainder of the Money send me the value thereof in your best Black Ribbon that is Suitable for Rolling Men's Hair. The Barer is going to Lay out some Money at Providence, which I recommended to your Shop."

Three years after the new shop was opened, its proprietor became the fortunate husband of Miss Susannah Crawford, the granddaughter of Gabriel Bernon and great-granddaughter of that Gideon Crawford who first brought the name to Providence. She is pronounced by the *Gazette* to be "an amiable young Lady, endowed with every Accomplishment that tends towards rendering a Marriage State agreeable." The young couple set up their household gods on the Towne Street opposite King's Church, it may be in the very house that Susannah's grandfather had built.

Like his father, Samuel Junior was numbered among the pillars of the Congregational church, where he as deacon took a prominent part in the church administration during the eventful years of the ministry of the Reverend David Shearman Rowland. After the withdrawal of Mr. Bass, Mr. Rowland was invited by the Congregationalists of Providence to become their pastor. He had already undergone a somewhat unusual experience while laboring to further the cause of his Master as pastor of the Congregational church in Plainfield, Connecticut. Briefly stated, the facts are as follows: In 1747, four years after taking his degree at Yale, Mr. Rowland was called to the church in Plainfield. In the course of the preliminary negotiations it transpired that the candidate was an uncompromising advocate of church government by means of a convention of churches, or "Consociation," and equally opposed to "Separatism," or the local-option method of managing church matters. Plainfield was Separatist, and a majority of the parishioners refused to confirm the call.

Notwithstanding this attitude of reserve on the part of his flock, Rowland continued to officiate as minister, probably believing that enforced spiritual illumination would be more beneficial than the "outer darkness." Gradually the vigilance of the opposition relaxed, until finally it came to pass that on one bitterly cold December day, when the town-meeting was held in the regular course of events, only

about fifty of the townspeople obeyed the summons; and of these, whether by accident or design, a large majority belonged to the church party. Such a leading of Providence as this was not to be neglected. Rowland was promptly voted into office, with a liberal salary. The Separatist contingent were indignant but helpless. Their efforts to induce Mr. Rowland to resign were made in vain. In explicit terms this champion of the faith set forth his conviction that the divine call to uphold the Ecclesiastical Constitution of Connecticut admitted no denial.

From that time to 1760 a state of open warfare prevailed. Year after year the town refused to pay the minister's salary, and year after year the minister sued the town. The episode (which is treated at length in Miss Larned's *History of Windham County*) was closed by the formation of two religious societies, and in the general rearrangement which followed, Mr. Rowland found himself left out in the cold. The church, whose battle as well as his own he had so uncompromisingly sustained, voted to dispen-  
se with his services, "on account of the great uneasiness prevailing." Bereft of his hard-won laurels in the very moment of victory, the undaunted young pastor looked about for new fields of conquest. They were close at hand. Shortly after his disconcerting rejection at the hands of the ingrates at Plainfield, he became the leader of a forlorn hope in Providence.

DISCOURSE ON THE REPEAL OF THE STAMP ACT,  
1766.

By Rev. David S. Rowland. From copy in the Rhode  
Island Historical Society.





# DIVINE PROVIDENCE

ILLUSTRATED and IMPROVED.

A

## Thanksgiving-Discourse,

PREACHED

(By Desire) in the PRESBYTERIAN, or  
Congregational Church

IN

PROVIDENCE, N. E. Wednesday JUNE 4, 1766.  
Being His MAJESTY's Birth Day, and Day of  
Rejoicing,

OCCASIONED BY THE

## REPEAL

OF THE

## STAMP-ACT.

(Published at the Desire of the Hearers)

BY

DAVID S. ROWLAND, M. A.  
Minister of said Church.

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*The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice.*

King DAVID.

*As free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of maliciousness, but as  
servants of God.---Fear God,---honour the king.*

Ap. PETER.

PROVIDENCE, (NEW-ENGLAND)  
Printed by SARAH GODDARD, and Company.



The Congregational church in that town had not enjoyed the ministrations of a settled pastor since the resignation of Mr. Bass, in 1758. The sympathetic Doctor Stiles, of Newport, describes it as "reduced to a low and disconsolate State . . . the Succession of the Church survived in but few . . . I think only 4 Brethren." If few, they were none the less equal to saving the situation. By a timely appeal to the churches in Bristol, Medfield, and Rehoboth they obtained spiritual counsel and fresh accessions to the membership, bringing the numbers up to twenty-one. Thus reinforced, the Church invited Mr. Rowland to fill the vacant pulpit. He "took the pastoral Care (without Instalment) accounting himself a Minister," says Stiles.

Although from this time forth the church presented a creditable harvest of listeners, in response to Mr. Rowland's unwearying labors, its financial record was far from satisfactory. The Providence business men of the eighteenth century, like the more widely known leaders of industry of a later generation, saw cause for congratulation in the fact that salvation is free. Comforting themselves with this reflection, they turned a deaf ear to appeals for the tithe of anise and of cummin, preferring rather to invest their hard-won shillings and pence in such enterprises as commanded a market price.

At length in 1771, the sorely tried Rowland informed his flock that he was "necessitated to medi-

tate a Removal for want of Subsistance." This unvarnished statement aroused the "Gentlemen of the Congregation," and loosened their purse-strings. "They are able, if God gives them a heart, to maintain the Ministry," comments good Doctor Stiles, as if that desirable consummation could hardly be attained without the intervention of a "special Providence." A businesslike presentation of the facts proved to be all-sufficient, however. Mr. Rowland's stipend was raised from fifty to one hundred pounds (legal money) per year, and he was to have "a House to live in." Among the list of those immortalized by Stiles as "giving liberally" are the Bowens, — Doctors Ephraim and Jabez, — the Nightingales, — father and son, — Deputy-Governor Sessions, our old acquaintance Jacob Whitman, and Joshua Hacker, — the owner of Hacker's Hall and Hacker's Packet, both well-known institutions in the Providence of the eighteenth century.

Under conditions so little indicative of prosperity and liberality as those just described, we are somewhat puzzled to account for the unprecedented appearance of an organ in the Congregational church, only nine months before the long-suffering pastor was led by force of circumstances to contemplate resigning his charge. The organ possessed two hundred pipes, so Doctor Stiles tells us, and that worthy divine also records that "This is the first organ in a dissenting Chh. in America except Jersey

[Princeton] College. . . . Mr. West has exercised himself upon it a month in learning to play." The use of instrumental music in church worship was still a daring innovation in the eyes of most of our forefathers. While members of the "dissenting churches" entertained conscientious scruples against the employment of this worldly instrument in the service of the Lord, its appearance in Providence aroused sentiments of an entirely different order, although equally condemnatory, in the breasts of such as belonged to the Anglican communion. These estimable adherents to the faith of their sovereign seem to have felt that in this matter the dissenters were not "playing fair," if we may judge from a remark of Doctor Stiles, who says: "it gives great offence to the Episcopalians in Providence, who say, we have nothing to do with it."

Evidently this cause of offence proved to be a stimulus to action as well, for in the early winter of the following year, — 1772, — an edifying and pious entertainment was announced to the good people of Providence by means of the following broadside —

This Evening  
The Tenth of December, at Six o'Clock the  
New  
Organ

At King's Church, will be play'd on by Mr. Flagg.  
A Number of Gentlemen belonging to the Town will  
assist on the Occasion, and perform the vocal Parts.  
A Sermon on the Lawfulness, Excellency, and Advan-

tage of Instrumental Music in public Worship, will be preached by the Reverend John Graves, after which a Collection will be made to defray the Expence of bringing the Organ from *Boston*, and fixing it in the Church.

Praise him with Organs. *Ps. CL, 4.*

The particular broadside quoted was the property of Nicholas Brown, merchant, and a stanch Baptist as well. An organ was anathema, according to his definition of orthodoxy, and ill-pleased with the Scriptural warrant appended by the light-minded Episcopalians to their announcement of a combined organ-recital and sermon, Mr. Brown added by way of commentary thereto: “‘Praise him with dancing, and the Stringed Instruments.’ *Ps. CL. 4th*,” and no doubt deduced from this the comforting conviction that David’s “organ” could not have been a wind-instrument.

Stiles alludes to the service as the “Consecration of the Organ.” “This Organ,” he goes on to relate, “was taken from the Concert-Hall in Boston — from being employed in promoting Festivity, Merriment, Effeminacy, Luxury, and Midnight Revellings — to be used in the Worship of God.” The Boston concerts of the eighteenth century must surely have been more lightsome and piquant affairs than their successors of orchestral fame to-day. In the almost complete absence of any public diversion save that furnished by the regularly recurring Sunday serv-

ANNOUNCEMENT OF INSTALLATION OF NEW ORGAN AT  
KING'S CHURCH, 1771

From the original broadside in the John Carter Brown  
Library.





This Evening,

The Tenth of December, at Six o'Clock, the

N E W

O R G A N,

At KING'S CHURCH, will be  
play'd on by Mr. FLAGG.

A Number of Gentlemen belonging to the Town will assist on the Occasion, and perform the vocal Parts. A SERMON, on the Lawfulness, Excellency and Advantage of INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC in public Worship, will be preached by the Reverend JOHN GRAVES, after which a Collection will be made to defray the Expence of bringing the ORGAN from Boston, and fixing it in the Church.

"Praise him with ORGANS."---Psalm cl. 4.

"Praise him with dancing and the stringed Instruments. Psalm 150. 4."



ices, we can easily imagine that good Mr. Graves secured a large and attentive audience for his disquisition on the "Lawfulness and Excellency of Music," etc.

Even more remarkable than the infrequency of public entertainments in the Providence of that day is the fact that when an attempt was made to supply the deficiency, it was sternly frowned on by the townspeople at large, not from religious or moral scruples, but because of the extravagant habits which were thus engendered and fostered. The ill-fated attempt alluded to was due to the enterprise of a company of travelling players. Their talents had been warmly appreciated by the pleasure-loving planters of the South, where a certificate of good behavior and histrionic merit was furnished them by no less a personage than the autocratic Governor Dinwiddie, of Virginia. Thus armed they went forth from the little town of Williamsburg, and after many days appeared in Newport, where this same certificate was published in the local paper, the *Mercury*, with a statement of the company's intention "to entertain the Town a short Time with Theatrical Performances. As they have been at considerable Expense, they humbly hope the Inhabitants will grant them their Protection and if they are so happy as to meet with Encouragement, they propose to give a Benefit Night for the Support of the Poor."

There were moneyed men in Newport who hailed

this new attraction with pleasure. Theatre-parties became the proper thing, and the players benefited not the poor alone, but themselves as well. As the second season in Newport drew to a close, the successful actors turned their thoughts to the neighboring town of Providence, whence a certain amount of patronage had been already forthcoming. With the aid of a letter of introduction to Nicholas and John Brown, a preliminary visit on the part of the advance agent proved encouraging. A lot of land was secured on the north side of what is now Meeting Street, then a new thoroughfare, with few houses, and those in scattered groups of three or four dwellings. The players put up a house at their own expense,—not an elaborate affair surely, for it was on May 20, 1762, that Benjamin Mason, of Newport, penned his letter of introduction, and the theatrical season was to open in July.

We may safely take it for granted that, like all other innovations, this establishment of the “Histronic Academy” was viewed with a certain tincture of moral disapproval by the more sober-minded among the townspeople. In the first week in July the season was opened with a representation entitled *Moro Castle taken by Storm*,—founded, no doubt, on the siege of Havana, one of the later incidents of the Seven Years’ War. Its success was undoubted, but short-lived. A long drought and a light hay-crop appear to have intensified the natural reluctance of

the Providence public to encourage, or even to condone, any form of unnecessary expenditure. A proposal to forbid the players to exercise their calling was agitated, and found many supporters. Benjamin Mason felt called upon to bestir himself once more in behalf of his friends. He wrote a second letter to Nicholas and John Brown, dated July 19, and running as follows: "The Bearer Mr. David Douglass is the principal Gentleman of the Actors who is Come from N. York expecting they have Liberty to Act at your place . . . any assistance you can give him shall esteem as done myself, I really think it will be of Advantage to your place, as I heard when at Boston Numbers of Gentm. would come from thence, as will also from this place, & I think it will be a hard thing upon them if your people have Suffered them to go on with their Building & not Allow them to Act, at Least as Long as would pay their expenses. . . ."

The townspeople, however, turned a deaf ear to all remonstrances. In fact, the same day on which Mr. Mason wrote his appeal for equity saw a town-meeting assembled in Providence, "Especially Called by Warrant," and by this potent assembly it was formally resolved that application should be made to the General Assembly at the following session, "To have a Act made for Suppressing all Kinds of Stage plays or Theatrical Shows within this Colony."

In accordance with this mandate of the people the state of affairs was duly set forth in a petition: In

defiance of the town's prohibition, the actors were "daily continuing to Exhibit Stage Plays and other Theatrical Performances, which has been and Still is the Ocasion of Great uneasiness to . . . your Honors' Petitioners in this County, humbly conceiving that So Expensive Amusements and idle Diversions, cannot be of any good Tendancy among us, especially at this Time, when this Colony as well as others, is labouring under the grievous Calamity of an uncommon Drought, and a very great Scarcity of Hay and Provisions." For these cogent reasons the Assembly is requested to make "Some Effectual Law to prevent any Stage Plays, Commedies, or Theatrical Performances being acted in this Colony for the Future." The legislators bowed to public opinion. A bill to forbid plays and playhouses was rushed through both branches of the Assembly on August 24, and by virtue of special clauses dealing with the existing situation, the obnoxious comedians were summarily warned out of Providence.

The sheriff, whose duty it was "to proclaim the Act by beat of Drum through the Streets of the Compact part of the Town of Providence," sagaciously contrived to combine business with pleasure. Attending the "Academy" with the proclamation in his pocket, he listened with great enjoyment to the evening's performance. At its close he rose in his seat, drew forth the dictum of the Assembly, and with decorous deliberation read it to the audience.

The first theatrical season in Providence came thus to an untimely end. Public sentiment was undoubtedly adverse to the players. Towards the close of their stay, threats of violence were heard, and tradition tells us that these murmurings became so loud that John Brown — then a hot-headed young man of twenty-six — prevailed on his friends to bring the cannon from the neighboring cadet-house to bear upon the Histrionic Academy, and that this Napoleonic manœuvre effectually intimidated the fiery spirits among the opposition, who had probably meditated nothing more deadly than a battery of eggs, varied perhaps by an occasional brick or stone.

The names of the Browns and their coterie of intimate friends do not appear among the four hundred and five signatures to the anti-theatre petition. Doubtless their sentiments were akin to those expressed by Martin Howard, of Newport, who figured as a sufferer in the Stamp-Act riots of 1765, and who was prominent among the little group of Rhode-Island loyalists. He evidently had enjoyed the short theatrical season in Providence, for, writing to John Brown in September, he says: "I have not forgot the very obliging Manner in which both you and Mrs. Brown treated Mrs. Howard & myself at Providence, if the Rascally Crew had not Expelled the poor Players from your Town We should have spent some time at Providence." Not until 1792 was another attempt made to establish a theatre in Providence.

After the triumph of the party of economy and utility there was a complete dearth of public amusements, save for the omnipresent lottery, without which no enterprise, from street-paving to parsonages, was undertaken, and the appearance of an occasional "Entertainment for the Curious," such as that described in the *Gazette*, in March, 1764. This was a "Course of Experiments in that instructive and entertaining Branch of Natural Philosophy called Electricity." The course was to consist of two lectures. In the first of these the abstract nature and properties of electricity would be explained, while the second offered "Many curious Experiments, naturally representing the various Phenomena of Thunder-Storms," and the lecturer promised that the "Endeavouring to guard against Lightning, in the Manner proposed" should be "shewn not to be chargeable with presumption, nor inconsistent with any of the Principles of natural or reveal'd Religion." All this was offered to the public for "one Spanish Dollar."

After these atmospheric disturbances had cleared away, the townspeople were left to their own resources for another six months. This time their outlook on life was broadened by a "View of the famous City of Jerusalem," somewhat ambiguously described as "a Work of Seven Years, done at Germantown in Pennsylvania." This triumph of cis-Atlantic art represented "Jerusalem, the Temple of Solomon,



his Royal Throne, the noted Towers, and Hills, likewise the Sufferings of Our Saviour from the Garden of Gethsemane to the Cross on the Hill of Golgotha"; — and was well summed up as "an artful Piece of Statuary . . . worthy to be seen by the Curious."

It was not until 1769 that "the Curious" were afforded an opportunity to enjoy anything remotely approaching the forbidden drama. At length the interesting announcement was made that —

At Mr. Hacker's Assembly-Room will be read

THE BEGGAR'S OPERA,

By a Person who has read and sung in most of the great Towns in America. . . . He personates all the Characters, and enters into the different Humours or Passions, as they change from one to another, throughout the Opera.

Tickets to be had . . . at Half a Dollar each.

. . . To begin at Seven o'Clock.

N.B. Young Gentlemen and Ladies taught to read with Propriety any Author in the English Language.

The postscript assuredly argues well for the impersonator's courage and sense of decorum. This advertisement is but one of several symptoms denoting that the purse-strings of the town fathers were loosened in behalf of the younger generation. A year earlier than this introduction of intellectual dissipation in the form of a reading of the *Beggars' Opera*, one John Baptist Tioli announced in the columns of the local paper that he proposed "to open a DANCING

SCHOOL . . . where will be taught the Minuet, Double Minuet, Quadruple Minuet, Paspîé, Gavotta, Alcuver, Hornpipe, Country Dances, &c of the newest Figures." Having taught "the principal Nobility in England and Ireland, and some very respectable Personages in America," the instructor was confident "of giving entire Satisfaction." His classes were to be held three days in the week. From nine until twelve A.M. ladies only were taught, and the hours from five until eight P.M. were "solely devoted to the Instruction of Gentlemen." The advertisement concludes by pointing out the resulting social advantages in these words: "After one Month's Instruction, the Gentlemen and Ladies will be directed to attend together, on every Friday Evening, at which Time their respective Parents inclined to Speculation will have free Access."

Three weeks later Mr. Tioli gave a concert, "at Mr. Hacker's Room," in Hacker's Hall on the Towne Street, where many a gay party met to dance the hours away during the next two generations of pleasure-seekers. On this festive occasion Mr. Tioli was "to perform a TAMBURIN DANCE, in the Italian Taste." His fellow-artist, a Mr. Dawson, was "by particular Desire" to "present a HORNPIPE." The concert was to be followed by a ball. The necessary tickets "(without which none can be admitted)" cost "One Dollar each." These tickets admitted a gentleman and a lady. There is little doubt that they were

PLAYING-CARD INVITATION

From John Brown for a dance at his new house, 1788.

From original in John Carter Brown Library.





Mr. JOHN BROWN requests  
the Favour of

*Miss  
M. Carter*

Company to a Dance, at his  
House on the Hill, on *Friday*  
Evening next, Seven o'Clock.

*January 2, 1788.*



printed on the backs of playing-cards, as was the prevailing custom in those good old times when paper was a luxury, and cardboard well-nigh unknown.

It is pleasant to realize that Mr. Tioli's varied talents met the recognition they deserved. His stay in town was of two months' duration, and in his announcement of the farewell concert and ball with which it was brought to a close, the courteous Italian turned a pretty compliment to his patrons as he expressed his thanks for the favors shown him. "T is with Reluctance he quits a Place, the Inhabitants of which are justly remarked for their Politeness towards Strangers, among whom he should think himself happy in residing, did not Business urge his immediate Departure."

By means of these old advertisements in the *Providence Gazette* we catch many illuminating glimpses of the social life of our forefathers. When, in 1762, William Goddard set up a printing-house in the town of Providence and published the first newspaper, he met with warm expressions of appreciation, — even though we must admit that the profits of the venture fell far short of the young printer's expectations.

The first number of this representative of the press appeared on October 20. It consists of four pages, measuring eight by fourteen inches, and contains a prospectus addressed to the public, in which are set forth "the Utility and Advantages of Performances

of this Nature, in a Mercantile Colony," together with the subscription price of "*Seven Shillings Lawful Money per Annum.*" The literary bill of fare offers the first of a series of articles on "The Planting and Growth of Providence," from the ready pen of Stephen Hopkins; a "Journal of the Expedition against St. John's, in New Foundland"; a column devoted to foreign affairs; notices of prizes brought into the ports of Philadelphia and New York; five local advertisements; "The Manifesto of the Empress Catherine II On her Advancement to the Throne"; a "Genealogical Table of the House of Russia"; and several short extracts from the London papers of the last of July and the first week in August. Such news as the above was to be furnished to the public in weekly instalments.

Although the editor and proprietor was born in Connecticut and learned his trade in New York, his kinsfolk were found throughout Rhode-Island colony. His mother was Sarah Updike, the daughter of that Lodowick who "planted" Wickford. The record of her six brothers and sisters, and their descendants, would fill a volume, and that volume would be one of more than local interest and importance. Besides numerous relatives of delightfully hospitable proclivities in Newport and the Narraganset Country, young William Goddard found in Providence his cousin, Captain John Updike, who had two years ago given up his seafaring life, married Mistress Ann



THE FIRST ISSUE OF THE PROVIDENCE GAZETTE

Established by William Goddard in 1762. From copy in  
the Rhode Island Historical Society.



[NUMBER]

THE  
PROVIDENCE GAZETTE;  
AND COUNTRY JOURNAL.



*Containing the freshest Advice, both Foreign and Domestic.*

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 20, 1762.

[Vol. I.]

PRINTING-OFFICE, PROVIDENCE, October 20, 1762.

TO THE PUBLICK.

THOUGH the generous and benevolent Assistance of many Gentlemen in this Colony, the PROVIDENCE GAZETTE and COUNTRY JOURNAL, is able to make it's Appearance to the World, agreeable to my Prayers; which demands my most grateful Acknowledgments.

AFTER what has been already so often advanced, in Favour of the Printing-Business, and the Utility and Advantages of Performances of M's Nature, in a mercantile Colony; it would seem imprudent in me to attempt making any Illustration to what is so universally known and acknowledged;—especially to a People, who by their Conduct, have made themselves eminent for Publick-spirit, Zeal, and a laudable Zeal and Ambition to promote every Branch of Business, that might be any Ways conducive to the Interest of their Country: But as it has ever been a Practice, amongst Authors of every Denomination, from the most celebrated Writers, even to a common Newspaper, to usher in their Productions to the World, with some Praise or Introduction, either with a Recommendation of their Excellencies, or to soften Censure by apologizing for their Defects, it seems absolutely necessary that I should, in some Measure, follow this Example, to excite the Indulgences of this Beginning.—and sooner than to acquaint the Publick with the Plan I purpose to pursue in the Execution of my Design; and as I now intend the Merit of the Performance will be it's best Recommendation, I shall leave the Candour or Applause it may deserve to the Judgment of the Reader: who, I hope, will think with Candour, and determine with Humanity.



Crawford, and established her and himself beneath the substantial family roof-tree, still standing on the Towne Street, albeit fallen from its high estate as a mansion-house to serve the combined purposes of shop and tenement accommodations.

For the few years immediately preceding his marriage, Captain Updike was shipmaster for Obadiah Brown and Company. In 1758 he took the good sloop *Speedwell* on the "First Voyage to Mississippi," in the larger meaning of that designation; for on perusal we find that his sailing-orders direct him to secure a load of logwood at the Bay of Honduras. The next year he sailed in a "flag a truse" for Louisiana with two French prisoners as exchanges, and a much assorted cargo of dry goods, glassware, and groceries. The exchange of prisoners was readily effected, but the governor at New Orleans, upon getting wind of the ensuing mercantile transactions, peremptorily interposed, and (says Updike) "wrote . . . that I must Begone from his Government." The enforced departure was made in such haste that the unfortunate trader had not time to collect such money as was owing him.

Another attempt, made in the following year, brought down upon the head of this persistent Yankee "Obsolute Orders for Departar," accompanied, however, by permission to appoint an agent to collect the outstanding obligations. Rebuffed a second time at New Orleans, Captain Updike "pro-

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ceeded to Penzecola," where he "Could have sold Great part of the Cargoe. . . . But the Garrison had not Received their pay Haveing above 12 Months Arrirs due and there was Little Money in the Place." This interesting experience closed the nautical chapter of John Updike's career. As one of the leading merchants of Providence, and as a pillar of King's Church, he long enjoyed the affection and respect of all who knew him, and we are assured by the writer of his obituary that "he was eminently distinguished for his nautical abilities and great ingenuity."

The last-named qualification appears in his cousin the printer, who published pamphlets, almanacs, and an occasional book, besides offering to the local public "A Variety of Books, Stationary, &c. Lately imported from London, and to be sold cheap for ready Money, . . . At the Printing-Office near the Court-House, Among which are . . . *The Whole Duty of Man*, Watts *Miscellanies*, . . . *Hymns and Lyric Poems* . . . *Conduct of a Married Life*, Ovid's *Art of Love*, Young's *Night Thoughts* . . . Testaments, Spelling Books, Psalters . . . and a few select Plays. . . . Also, a few elegant Pictures, viz. of His Majesty King George III. and his Royal Consort Queen Charlotte; the great Mr. Pitt, and the immortal General Wolfe. Also, a few Boxes of Powder for the Preservation of the Teeth; much esteemed by Ladies."

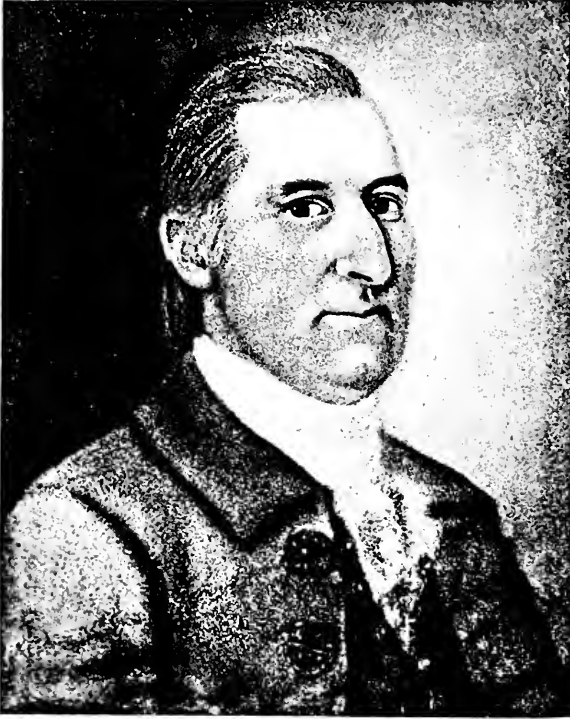
However profitable the printing-business as a

PORTRAIT OF WILLIAM GODDARD

From a reproduction of the original portrait owned by  
the late Col. William Goddard.









whole may have been, it is but too evident that the newspaper department did not pay its way. Appeals for the payment of dilatory subscriptions begin to appear in its columns by the end of the first six months. When to this perennial setback was added the burden of stamp duties, — which if paid drew down public execration on the head of the editor, and if unpaid exposed him to prosecution on the part of the Crown, — William Goddard withdrew himself and his news-sheet from the debatable ground by suspending publication for six months. It was not, however, until the Stamp Act had been repealed — over a year later — that the paper reappeared, and this time under the auspices of another publishing firm, — that of Sarah Goddard and Company. Its pioneer editor had already found a business opening in New York. From there he went to Philadelphia, where, in 1768, his mother joined him. From 1773 to 1792, Mr. Goddard published a semi-weekly paper in Baltimore.

It must not be thought for a moment that these years of absence were years of forgetfulness. There were frequent visits to Providence quite unconnected with newspaper items and exchanges, until, indeed, we come to an item chronicled under the date of May 27, 1786, to the following effect: "Thursday last was married at Cranston . . . William Goddard, Esquire, of Baltimore, Printer, to Miss Abigail Angell, eldest daughter of the late Brigadier-General Angell;

a Lady of great Merit, her mental Acquirements, joined to a most amiable Disposition, being highly honourable to the Sex, and are pleasing Presages of connubial Felicity." "Brigadier-General Angell's" earlier career as town-clerk and justice of the peace in Providence is better known than his military experiences, and probably furnishes quite as strong a claim to the respect of posterity. He was a man of upright character and his public no less than his private career was marked by independence and probity. Six years after his marriage William Goddard returned to Rhode Island. The remainder of his life was passed on his farm in Johnston, where was born his son, William Giles Goddard, the future Professor of Belles-Lettres in Brown University.

As for the *Providence Gazette*, after the "Company" became embodied in the person of the admirable and sagacious John Carter, of Philadelphia, the little news-sheet entered on a creditable, permanent, and fairly prosperous career. This change was effected in 1768. Carter, who had learned his trade of the shrewd and practical Benjamin Franklin, was a young man of twenty-two when he came from Philadelphia to Providence, in 1767. His mother was left a widow but a few months before the birth of this son, the youngest of her five children. His father was an Irishman, who was killed in a naval battle of the war of 1745. The son was 'a man of considerable acumen, well trained for his business,

—as might be expected,—and possessed of that choleric and generous-hearted temperament that so frequently characterizes the Irish-American. He retained “the sign of Shakespear’s Head,” which had served to mark his predecessor’s calling, but the selection of a permanent place of business was evidently fraught with difficulty. It was not until several changes had been made, that the combined printing and post-office was “removed to Meeting Street, nearly opposite the Friends Meeting House,” where its whilom domicile may be seen to-day.

Carter’s house was next door to his brother-in-law, Captain John Updike. Both men were of that assertive type of character which rather courts than avoids the candid expression of any difference of opinion. It is not surprising, therefore, that when in late years Captain Updike rented his empty shop, close by, to a rival printer, Mr. Carter’s emphatic protests brought forth lively rejoinders from the Captain, nor can we doubt that the resulting tempest made the neighborhood teapot an exhilarating theme of discussion for the time being. John Carter’s daughter Ann married Nicholas Brown, the son of our old friend Nicholas,—but those are the chronicles of a later generation.

John Carter’s “sign of Shakespeare’s Head” topped a post some six or eight feet in height, which stood before the house, and symbolized the treasures of literature to be found within.

The majority of the many and diverse signs, used by the contemporaries of John Carter to lure the passing customer across the threshold, were suspended from a crossbeam thrust into the wall, and projecting over the doorway. Another variation is seen in the "Sign of the Brazen Lion," at the North End of the town, where the king of beasts, most preposterously reclining in midair, is suspended from a veritable gallows-tree, by means of chains attached to his back.

A neighboring shop belonged to "Robert Perrigo, Cordwainer," who displayed the "Sign of the Boot," and declared himself competent to make boots and shoes "after the neatest and most genteel Manner, which he sells very reasonable." He was also provided with "the best of Butter to sell by the small Quantity."

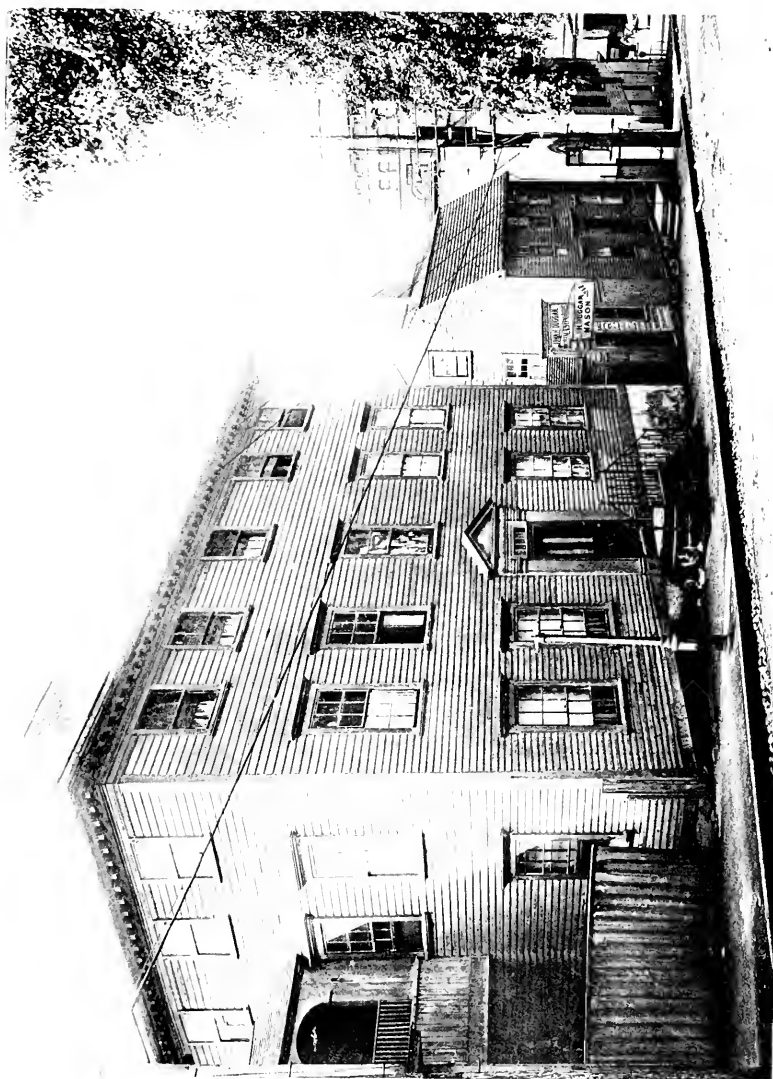
Captain Joseph Olney, likewise of the North End, offered for sale at the "Sign of the Golden Ball," "Hardware and Rum, and Other equally well assorted Merchandize," while Nathaniel Balch, at the "Sign of the Hat, near Captain Joseph Olney's," sold stoneware and decanters, "pipes pepper, spices, &c., Cheshire cheese, also hats, flour, chocolate, . . . also a few lottery tickets." He made a specialty of "Women's very neat Lynn Shoes . . . at 6s. 8d. by the single Pair, and cheaper by the Quantity." Balch was one of that group of beaux among whom Moses Brown, Jabez Bowen, and Jonathan Clarke were conspicuous.

SHAKESPEARE'S HEAD (NOW 21 MEETING STREET)

The printing office, post-office and residence of John Carter, where the *Providence Gazette* was printed after 1772. The house beyond is the Updike House. From a photograph, taken in 1911, by Willis A. Dean.









Others utilized the well-known landmarks of the town. Darius Sessions — better known perhaps as Deputy-Governor Sessions — described his shop as “on the Main Street between the Court-House and the Church, and directly opposite the large Button-Wood Tree.” There he was ready to supply “New Milk, Cheese, Choice French Brandy, Holland Geneva, Cordial Waters, and Sundry Sorts of Wines,” together with “a general Assortment of West India Goods, Grocery, and many other Articles.”

A little south of the Deputy Governor, Clark and Nightingale advertised “a large Assortment of English and India Piece Goods; Likewise Stationary and Hard Ware . . . at their Shop, newly opened, at the Sign of the Frying-Pan and Fish, adjoining to the North-West Corner of the Court-House Lot, and opposite Oliver Arnold, Esquire.” The junior member of this firm was Joseph Nightingale, a younger son of Samuel, of Concord Distil House fame. Some years later the firm removed to the south of the Town Parade, and the partners built for themselves mansion-houses on “the new Street, called Back, or Benefit.” Joseph Nightingale’s house was sold after his death, in 1797, and is to-day known by the name of its new owner as the “John Carter Brown House.”

“Oliver Arnold, Esquire,” who was so universally known as to serve his fellow-townsmen in the capacity of landmark as well as that of legal adviser, died two years after the date of the advertisement just

quoted, at the early age of thirty-five. He was a brilliant member of the group of able lawyers who flourished in the colony of Rhode Island during these busy days of litigation, when the man without a lawsuit on his hands would have been as rarely found as the white blackbird. If no quarrel worthy of a lawyer's fee was available, it was always possible — in Rhode Island — to sue, or be sued, for debt. The early death of so promising a member of the legal profession was universally deplored. Not content with an unusually laudatory obituary, couched in terms of sufficiently complimentary prose, one admirer resorted to poetry to express his feelings, and in the course of a series of couplets informed his readers that, —

With Virtue, Learning, Wit and Worth combin'd,  
Benev'lence warm'd his Breast and fir'd his Mind;  
Unmoved by Prejudice, unbrib'd by Gold,  
Justice he sought, in conscious Virtue Bold —

Correct with Spirit, eloquent with Ease,  
Intent to reason, or polite to please:  
Persuasive Eloquence sat on his Tongue,  
While he the *Right* approv'd, condemn'd the *Wrong*.

Emotions other than those of unmixed regret actuated Oliver Arnold's fellow-townsmen, John Cole, who at once put an advertisement into the *Gazette*, to say that "as several Gentlemen of the Law have lately removed from Providence and as there is now another Vacancy at the Bar, by the Death of the late worthy and ingenious Oliver Arnold, Esquire,

the Subscriber proposes undertaking the Practice of the Law, a Business to which he was brought up."

This worthy "Subscriber," who came from Wickford to Providence, was a descendant of Anne Hutchinson, and may have acquired his own "very voluble tongue" from that distinguished ancestress. He was an educated man, well grounded in the classics, and well equipped for his chosen profession of the law by a course of study in the office of Daniel Updike, the attorney-general for the colony. With that due regard for precedent and custom which becomes a legal mind, John Cole married his patron's daughter, and shortly afterward came to Providence. He soon made a name for himself in his chosen profession, and employed his extra-legal moments in trading in real estate, and handling cordage. His holdings at Tockwotton became really extensive. There he bought a one-half interest in a ropewalk, and there he built for himself a house of "five Rooms on a Floor" and laid out "a handsom Garden" on what is now Cole Street, just beyond East Street. Cole describes his estate as "For a pleasant Situation and extensive Prospect . . . inferior to no Place whatever, as one may stand at the Door, and take a View of the Bay and River from Rhode-Island to Providence."

As to-day we stand in Tockwotton Park and force imagination to eliminate from the scene the unsightly coal-wharves and gasometers that disfigure

one of the most naturally beautiful spots in Providence, it is not difficult to realize the truth of John Cole's description, one hundred and fifty-odd years ago. The ropewalk was at the northeast corner of the present Hope and Cole Streets.

In 1769, John Cole was appointed postmaster in Providence "in the Room of Mr. William Goddard." His somewhat disorderly habits led to frequent inconvenience in the receipt and delivery of letters. When, in a hurried departure for the circuit courts, the busy lawyer rode out of town, carrying with him in a fit of absent-mindedness the incoming mail for the current week, even the long-suffering Providence public raised a voice of protest. Cole's incumbency was succeeded by the more satisfactory one of John Carter, who for two years labored in vain to extract from the dilatory and migratory Cole the books and forms pertaining to his office, which he was "in daily expectation of receiving," says Inspector Hugh Finlay, in his official report. Having profitably passed the Sundays of his youth under the ministrations of good Doctor McSparran, Cole attached himself to King's Church on coming to Providence, and gave that society his hearty support. His career was marked by prosperity and success. He became chief justice of the superior court and a leading politician. He was especially active in the Revolutionary cause. He died in 1777, at the inoculation hospital then recently established in North Providence.

"Nearly opposite" the firm of Clark and Nightingale, on the Towne Street, was Knight Dexter, a shopkeeper of trading instincts inherited from both father and grandfather. At the "Sign of the Boy and Book," he sold a well-selected assortment of dry goods whose very names have become obsolete. There were "Shalloons, Tammies, Sagathees, Thicksetts, Taffaties and Persians; Allopeens, Callimancoes, red and blue Duffils, black and blue Everlastings," as well as "London Pewter, Spelling-Books and Inkpots; Allspice, Copperas, and Log-Wood." A little later, when the summer sun had dried the fords and mud-holes, Mr. Dexter extended the scope of his business operations to include "a Number of good Horses and genteel Carriages, for the Use of Gentlemen and Ladies, whether for long Journies, little rural Sallies, or grand Parties of Pleasure, equipped on the shortest Notice, and at a very moderate Rate." Mr. Dexter's farm occupied the land now held by the Dexter Asylum, so called in remembrance of his son Ebenezer Knight Dexter, who donated the property to the city of Providence.

Close by Knight Dexter's shop was the popular tavern of Richard Olney, rechristened the "Crown Coffee House," the better to keep abreast of the times. From this centre of activity the stage-coach was advertised to set out every Tuesday morning for Boston. This public accommodation was due to the enterprise of Thomas Sabin. Smith and Sabin kept

a shop "at the Sign of the Sultan's Head, near the East End of the Great Bridge," where were sold "dry Goods, both East and West-Indian, at the lowest Rates."

A short distance around the corner from Smith and Sabin, and just beyond the old wading-place, was the shop where, "At the Sign of the Elephant," James Green sold "A Large and Compleat Assortment of Brazieri, English Piece Goods, Rum, Flax, Indigo, and Tea."

Still farther north, at the point where now the railway tunnel enters the hillside, was the "Sign of the Golden Eagle." Here Joseph and William Russell offered to the subscribers to the *Gazette* "Velvets, Broadcloths, superfine, of scarlet for Men's and Women's long Cloaks"; also paper, looking-glasses, and books. Four years later, their offer of laces, buttons, firesets, hinges, powder-horns, indigo, and grindstones is enforced by an appeal to local patriotism: "As we lay out our Money chiefly in this Town and Country round, and as others send the greatest Part they receive out of the Government, to the great Detriment of this Colony and of this Town in particular; we doubt not but the People among us . . . will give us the Preference."

Joseph and William Russell were sons of a worthy Boston merchant, Thomas Russell by name. The boys of the family came to Providence in or about the year 1752, when Joseph was twenty years of age,



and William thirteen. They settled on the West Side of the river, where within the previous ten years more improvements had been set on foot than the East Side had tolerated in as many decades. The Boston pioneers proved themselves men of substance, if not of years. By 1759 they were owners of a shop and wharf on a portion of the land now occupied by the Banigan Building. A few years later the shop and its proprietors moved to the East Side, where they became identified with the Sign "of the Golden Eagle," on the Towne Street.

Other immigrants from the Russell roof-tree arrived in Providence. A younger brother, Jonathan, put in an appearance in or near 1770, bought some land on the West Side, and set up a shop there "at the Sign of the Black-Boy, opposite to Captain George Jackson's," where he sold "at the most reasonable Rate for Cash A neat Assortment of European & other Goods — Choice West-India & New-England Rum, Sugar, Flour, Indigo, Tea, Coffee, &c."

John — the second son — had already identified himself with a shipyard where were built, we may assume, such vessels as the ship *Nancy*, of one hundred and sixty-six tons burden, which was purchased by Nicholas Brown and Company of Joseph and William Russell, in 1764. Joseph and William Russell appear to have owned the first ships which cleared from Providence for London. The snow

*Tristram Shandy* and her cargoes called forth many an expansive advertisement in the newspaper issues of the sixties. These brothers were associated in their family and business life until Joseph's death, in 1792.

During the unsettled days of the Revolutionary period, when the British from their base at Newport harassed the shores of Narragansett Bay as the whim of the moment dictated, and Providence was filled with poverty-stricken refugees, many a prudent and patriotic citizen removed his family and his valuables to some farm in the back country, or to some inland town less readily accessible from the enemy's headquarters. It was during this time of uncertainty and anxiety that Joseph Russell bought a farm among the hills of Woodstock, Connecticut, and the attractions of that beautiful countryside proved sufficiently potent to prevent a permanent residence in Providence after the war's alarms had died away. He died at Woodstock, a comparatively young man, in the sixtieth year of his age. His obituary chronicles among other items that he was "a Trustee of the College in this Town, and had filled the Office of a Magistrate in this State. As a Man of Business, he was industrious and punctual; as a Christian, a regular Observer of public Worship in the Episcopal Church."

Out of his family of eleven children three daughters survived him. His oldest son Joseph, who is pronounced by John Howland "one of the handsomest

young men in town," lived to the age of thirty and married Joana Jenckes, the daughter of our old acquaintance the lieutenant-governor. The morbidly pathetic story of his daughter Elizabeth, who mourned her brilliant young lover in seclusion for nine years, and followed him to the grave when she was thirty-three, may be read in Updike's *Memoirs of the Rhode Island Bar*. The twin daughters who died in girlhood attract our attention from the circumstance that they were christened Hayley and Hopkins, obviously to commemorate the London firm of that name, to whom the Russells, and also the Browns, made frequent consignments. It is somewhat unusual to find so conspicuous an acknowledgment of past favors in the annals of an importing-house.

William Russell never married. After the death of his brother Joseph, he returned to the Providence house on the Towne Street, and lived there until his own death, in 1825. At the beginning of the war of the Revolution he was commanding officer of the Providence Cadets, and throughout his long life was always known as Colonel Russell. Six years before his death, and shortly after the passing of his eightieth birthday, Colonel Russell wrote to the Reverend Mr. Crocker, of St. John's Church (formerly King's Church), to say that, while he was a Baptist from principle he was "not a stiff, rigid one," and that his "late, never to be forgotten Brother Mr. Joseph Rus-

sell . . . and his large family were of your Society — and in his day a pillar of your Church. All his numerous of-spring are so also — as are most of my other relatives. They are right — and I am right — if we from the heart really think so. Perhaps it may be tho't a little singular by some few of our Society that I should leave behind me a request to have the Church funeral service, read over my Grave, when I am gone. *But Sir I do request it*, provided there is no impropriety in its being done to one of another Society. this you are a judge of, as it respects myself it can do little, or rather no Good. But as I shall leave behind me many relatives of your Society, it probably will be Gratifying to 'em to have the Church fun'l service read over my Grave, and that Sir is my motive for wishing it done."

No one can read these words of kindly consideration for others and not look with a more sympathetic interest on the monument in St. John's burial-ground, erected in memory of Joseph and William, "Brothers and Partners in Trade Who lived together Thirty years with the most endearing love, affection, and real friendship Till Death separated them for a short period. As in their lives they were most happily connected — so doth their Ashes now sweetly sleep together in this same grave, till the Trump of God shall call them to awake."

The remaining brothers of the house of Russell — John, Jonathan, and Thomas — were all so fortunate

as to leave heirs to perpetuate their name and fame. John served as commissary during part of the Revolutionary War. He lived on Benefit Street, at the foot of Dorr's Hill. A more interesting personality is that of his son William. The boy was a born sailor, and must have given evidence of the fact at a tender age, for when eighteen he was put in command of an East-Indiaman. This was the beginning of a long and prosperous nautical career. For twenty-four years Captain Russell "ploughed the ocean wave" between Providence and the ports of India and China, to the unalloyed satisfaction of all immediately concerned.

Jonathan Russell, of the shop on the West Side, at the "Sign of the Black Boy," withdrew to enjoy the serene pleasures of a rural life at Mendon, Massachusetts, after the virtual destruction of the business of Providence consequent upon the appearance of our English cousins in Newport. His son — subsequently the Honorable Jonathan Russell — was of those on whom greatness may be truly said to be thrust. The boy — a bright, talented young fellow — came to Providence to study law. His hopes of success in this field were quenched since it proved impossible for him to speak without notes, and the young man became a merchant. When he was serving as supercargo on board a vessel bound to some European port, the ship was seized by a French cruiser and taken into Copenhagen. It proved some-

what difficult to impress on the minds of those in authority the claims of neutrals to be treated with respect, and Russell at length proceeded to Paris in order to obtain the help and protection of the American Minister there, — General Armstrong. This move proved effective, and as matters dragged their diplomatic length across the stage of French politics, the Minister became so much impressed with his young countryman's tact and ability that on his own return to America he persuaded Russell to remain in Paris, in charge of American interests. His choice of a substitute was vindicated. Russell acquitted himself with credit, and served as one of the commissioners to conclude the Treaty of Ghent, at the close of the War of 1812. The political career for which these events so admirably prepared the way eluded the poor man's grasp even as his hand seemed about to close upon it. On his return to America he was at once sent to Congress, but his inherent inability to speak in public prevented his becoming more than a voting member.

The youngest of the Russell contingent who came to Providence in pre-Revolutionary times was Thomas of that name. He was a half-brother of Joseph, William, John and Jonathan, and the junior by seventeen years of the youngest of this first group. He and his sister Elizabeth — one year the older of the two — came to live with Brother Jonathan when quite young, — not improbably after their mother's

second marriage. Their father died in 1760. John Howland is authority for the statement that little Tommy Russell tended shop for his big brother. "He was a bright, active lad," says Howland; "he was about my own age, and we spent many evenings together." When Brother Jonathan moved to Mendon, Tommy became a lieutenant in the Continental Army. He saw service in several Hudson River campaigns, and took part in the action of 1778 under Sullivan, when the pursuing British were repulsed by the rear guard of the American forces in the so-called Battle of Rhode Island.

In November, 1779, our young military hero was appointed aid to General Stark with the rank of major. His subsequent experience serves as one more illustration of the well-worn maxim that bad luck on the battle-field may be compensated by victories elsewhere. John Howland describes the gallant Russell as "a young man of good capacity and handsome address." Thus equipped for action it is small wonder that the young officer laid successful siege to the heart of Miss Ann Handy, of Newport, the sister of his friend, Major Handy, whose company had helped to cheer the vicissitudes of a soldier's life during the dreary years of the seventies. At the close of his career as a soldier, our veteran made his home in Philadelphia for a few years. Thence he removed to Newport, to enter on a long and successful career as merchant and ship-owner in

the China trade. A detailed account of the interesting and honorable career of Charles Handy Russell, the son of Thomas, would carry us far beyond the limits of this volume.

Thomas's sister Elizabeth, who came with him to Providence in the days before the Revolutionary War clouds were fairly above the horizon, was destined to follow their course with anxious interest in the years to come. In 1777 she married Doctor Solomon Drowne, of Providence, "an eloquent and learned man," and a young surgeon in the Revolutionary Army, whose professional duties took him far afield for four long weary years. His course in medicine at the University of Pennsylvania was supplemented, after the close of the war, by work in the hospitals and medical schools of Holland and France. President Manning, of Rhode Island College, describes him as "a gentleman of remarkable modesty, . . . a member of the Corporation, and of unblemished character, on whose information you may safely rely." The later years of his life were passed at his home, well known as Mount Hygeia, in Foster, Rhode Island. There were his famed botanical gardens, whose reputation lost nothing, we may be sure, from their somewhat inaccessible situation.





## Chapter IX

### RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE AND THE “BAPTIST CATHEDRAL”

**I**N the fall of 1762 James Manning, then a young man of twenty-four, was graduated from the College of New Jersey, commonly called Princeton College. In the course of the next six months he was licensed by the Baptist church at Scotch Plains, New Jersey, to “preach publicly,” and further recommended “as one sound, regular, and qualified to preach the Gospel.” Armed with these credentials he set out on his long and successful career as preacher, teacher, and administrator, pausing only for the final measure of preparation for the journey of life — his marriage with Margaret Stites, of Elizabethtown. This event was speedily followed by the young minister’s public ordination, and that in turn by his departure for the unexpected field of labor which, as the event proved, was awaiting him in the Providence Plantation.

In the early summer he took passage for Halifax, intending to travel slowly homeward through New England and the Middle Colonies, and to acquaint himself at first hand with the religious prospects of the Baptist denomination in those parts. On the trip north the vessel touched at Newport, and there

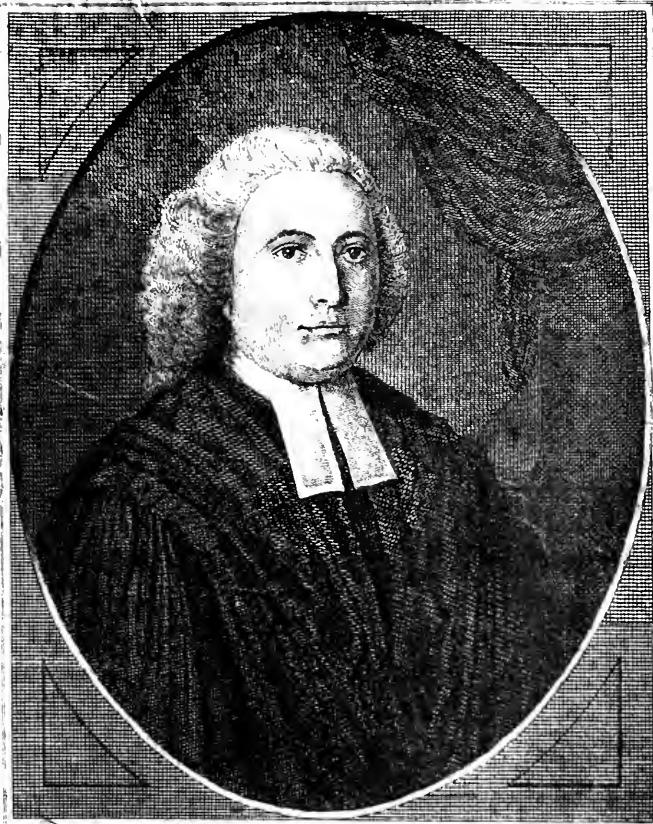
young Manning found opportunity to put in a word or two respecting the "apprehension" of the Philadelphia Association of Baptists that "it was practicable and expedient to erect a college in the colony of Rhode Island, under the chief direction of the Baptists." Several gentlemen were interviewed "relative to a Seminary of Polite Literature," and the suggestion was met with prompt approval by the Newport magnates. A special meeting of the brethren was devoted to the subject, and Josias Lyndon and Colonel Job Bennet were appointed to draw up a charter of incorporation for presentation to the next General Assembly.

The time was short. It was already July, and the Assembly met, by adjournment, in August. The committee was somewhat uncertain as to the requisite forms and phrases, and "pleading unskilfulness . . . requested that their trusty friend, Reverend Ezra Stiles, might be solicited to assist them." Small solicitation was required. The Reverend Ezra Stiles is well known to the present generation, and was far better known to his own, as a stanch Congregationalist, whose zeal for his order would compare favorably with that of any mediæval churchman. When the Philistines of the Baptist denomination delivered themselves into his hands, as aforesaid, he cheerfully acceded to their request, and made adroit use of his opportunity. The charter was forthcoming on the appointed day, was read to the parties concerned,

PORTRAIT OF JAMES MANNING, PRESIDENT OF BROWN  
UNIVERSITY

From an early engraving.





The Rev<sup>d</sup> JAMES MANNING, D. D.

*Late Pastor of the Baptist Church and  
President of the College at Providence,  
Rhode Island*



accepted by them, and sent for confirmation to the Assembly.

In the confusing array of authorities and powers presented by the document the simple-minded hearers had failed to perceive that although the majority of the Trustees were Baptists, as stipulated, all real power was vested in the Fellows, of whom eight out of twelve must be Congregationalists, and the other four might be.

But when once the document was before the Assembly, matters took a different turn. Our old friend, Judge Daniel Jenckes, was deputy for Providence, and Jenckes was a good Baptist, a capital business man, and no mean politician. In a few terse sentences he pointed out to the astonished Governor Lyndon the true tenor of the charter drawn up by his "trusty friend, Reverend Ezra Stiles." Needless to say, the matter was adjourned to the next session of the Assembly.

Not unnaturally the Governor took his clerical friend to task for what might well seem to the irate magistrate a breach of trust. Doctor Stiles is credited with an answer which, if not satisfactory, was at all events sufficiently explicit, to the effect that he had merely looked after the interests of his own society, and the Baptists might have been expected to do as much for theirs.

Meanwhile new complications were arising at Providence, whither Judge Jenckes had taken the

charter for the enlightenment of all who were interested in the proposed "Seminary." The Judge's house on the Town Parade now became more conspicuously than ever a centre of information. His son-in-law, Nicholas Brown, the rising young merchant and politician, Nicholas Cooke, Rhode Island's first "war governor," Stephen Hopkins, ever astute and judicious in counsel, and others less well known came to see for themselves the pit into which they had so nearly fallen.

A near neighbor and good friend of the Judge's was Doctor Ephraim Bowen. Albeit a Congregationalist, he was one of the trusted members of the little social and business oligarchy of the town. His son Jabez has frequently appeared in these pages as an intimate friend of Moses Brown, Nathaniel Balch, George Hopkins, the Wantons of Newport, and other gay young sparks of the period. It was not long since he had married the daughter of Obadiah Brown. It is not strange that Doctor Ephraim wished to read the charter, nor that Judge Jenckes lent him the document. Quite naturally, too, the Doctor passed it on to his fellow-worshipper, Deacon Samuel Nightingale, of the Congregationalist Church, whose orthodoxy was as zealous as that of good Ezra Stiles himself. At this point in its peregrinations the charter mysteriously disappeared. The most rigorous search proved unavailing. Doctor Bowen inquired and advertised in vain, and when the As-



sembly met, the unfortunate Judge Jenckes found himself a mark for insinuations of unfair play and breach of trust, "which," he says, "brought on very disagreeable altercations and bickerings."

It had already been determined by those high in the counsels of the colony to make a fresh start. New members had been added to the committee, and in the charter as finally adopted the Congregationalists found themselves in the condition of the man who was bidden to take a lower seat. Manning has, himself, given us a statement of their position : "The most material alterations were, appointing the same number of Baptists in the Fellowship that had been appointed of the Presbyterians by Doctor Stiles; settling the presidency in the Baptist society; adding three Baptists to the Trustees, and putting more Episcopalians than Presbyterians in the Corporation." This readjustment of conditions and denominations was not concluded until the February of 1764, nor then without a preliminary series of charges and counter-charges from the opposing parties. Although the Reverend Morgan Edwards's allusion to the charter as "a brand plucked from the burning" had probably no reference to the warmth and vehemence of the preliminary debates, it might well be so applied.

As for Doctor Stiles's charter, it was by some unrecorded agency returned to its author, and after his death was stored among the church archives until

well into the nineteenth century. It is now the property of Brown University.

Only a few days before the charter was granted by the Assembly, a "cry from Macedonia" reached the ears of its pioneer advocate, James Manning. This appeal for aid came from Warren, a thriving little shipping-town just above the head of Narragansett Bay, and some ten miles down the river from Providence. The Baptist contingent in this little settlement was fairly prosperous, and moved by a laudable desire to have a church of their own, extended to the young aspirant for clerical honors "a call to come over from New Jersey and settle amongst them." The call was accepted. A church was built, and later a parsonage, and the young minister was fairly launched upon his long and honorable career.

With an eye to the interests of that "Seminary of Polite Literature" whose cause he had so greatly at heart, Mr. Manning straightway opened a Latin School to serve as a feeder to the college when the latter institution should become an accomplished fact. His school was immediately successful, although somewhat hampered by difficulties in the way of equipment. The necessary textbooks were not to be found in America, and must be sent for to London. It is to be hoped that the master realized a sufficient commission on their sale to eke out his meagre tuition fee of three Spanish milled dollars a quarter.

In September, 1764, the "Corporation for founding and endowing a College . . . within the Colony of Rhode Island" held its first meeting. Stephen Hopkins was elected chancellor, the offices of secretary and treasurer were filled,<sup>1</sup> and the requisite machinery for soliciting and receiving donations and subscriptions was set in motion. It was not until a year later, at the second meeting of the corporation, that Manning received his comprehensive appointment as "President of the College, Professor of Languages and other Branches of Learning, with full Power to Act immediately in these Capacities at Warren or Elsewhere."

Among the necessary formalities of collegiate equipment was the adoption of a college seal. In accordance with the resolution of the corporation, the seal was ordered at Boston, with this device, "Busts of the King and Queen in profile face to face; underneath George III, Charlotte; round the border the seal of the Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in America." Impressions of these sovereigns as patrons of academic honors still adorn the college diplomas of those early years.<sup>2</sup>

The third day of September, 1765, marked an eventful epoch in the history of the infant "Seminary." It was then that William Rogers, of Newport,

<sup>1</sup> Guild, 53.

<sup>2</sup> In 1782 the old seal was broken by order of the corporation, and replaced by that in use to-day.

aged fourteen, was duly registered, — the first student matriculated at Rhode Island College. For nine months and seventeen days thereafter he was privileged to represent the entire undergraduate body of his alma mater.

In June, 1766, the registration of Manning's brother-in-law, Richard Stites, increased the student body by one hundred per cent. In view of this encouragement the President felt himself justified in engaging an assistant. He wrote at once to David Howell, just on the point of graduating from the College of New Jersey, to offer the suggestion that it might be worth his while to look over the ground at Warren before making any definite arrangement for the future. "A taste for Learning," wrote Manning, "is greatly upon the increase in this Colony." Even Providence had become infected with the prevailing enthusiasm when, a few months before this, young Benjamin Stelle, "of the Jersey College," had applied to Manning for advice, and for a recommendation as a teacher of youth; he was straightway introduced to Mr. Manning's friends in Providence, with the assurance that "his Proficiency is . . . as good as common, and his Character fair and free from blots."

Within a few months the Latin School founded by this promising candidate for pedagogical honors was filled to overflowing, and in the following spring that young pedagogue felt warranted in breaking ground

DIPLOMA FROM RHODE ISLAND COLLEGE (NOW BROWN  
UNIVERSITY) 1789

Signed by James Manning, David Howell, Perez Fobes,  
and Benjamin West. From original document in the  
Brown University Library.









in a hitherto neglected field of educational enterprise. He proposed, through the columns of the indispensable *Gazette*, "to open a school for the instruction of young ladies, in the knowledge of writing and arithmetic." Two sessions a day for a term of four months, beginning on the 20th of May, were planned. The periods were not unduly long, but the hours named would effectually daunt most academic ambitions of the present ease-loving generation. They were "from 6 o'clock in the morning until half after 7; and from half after four until half after 6, in the afternoon." Mr. Stelle announced further that the fee for this tuition would be "two dollars for each scholar." His proposals seem to have been acceptable to the public to whom he looked for patronage. In October a night school was opened for "all Persons who have a Mind to come, or send their Children," and with the beginning of the second year a course in reading was added to the curriculum.

In the December of this, his third year in Providence, Benjamin Stelle married Miss Huldah Crawford, in whom were "agreeably united the several Accomplishments which tend toward rendering the nuptial Bond easy and desireable." Miss Huldah was a sister of Susannah Crawford, who, with her enterprising husband, Captain John Updike, was living on the Towne Street in the neighborhood where Mr. and Mrs. Stelle began housekeeping. When in 1770, the college itself and the attendant

Latin School were removed to Providence, our pioneer schoolmaster in that abode of the illiterate betook himself to other paths of usefulness.

In August of that eventful year occurred the death of the old doctor, Colonel Jabez Bowen, at the age of threescore years and fourteen, — “for a great Number of Years . . . eminent in the Practise of Physics and Surgery,” says the *Gazette*. Doctor Jabez came to Providence from Rehoboth in the early twenties of the eighteenth century. He was one of the many interesting and cultivated men who acted as leaven upon the crude substance of our local society. The mantle of this skilful practitioner fell upon the shoulders of his nephew Doctor Ephraim, whose mansion-house adorned the Parade, and whose son, Doctor Jabez the younger, was renowned alike in the social, medical, and military circles of Rhode Island Colony. Old Doctor Jabez left one son, Benjamin, who during the doctor’s lifetime managed the apothecary-shop opposite the family dwelling-house, and whose most prominent claim to the remembrance of posterity is the fact that shortly after his father’s death he took Benjamin Stelle into partnership in the drug business. The two men were already joint owners of a chocolate-mill, to the evident satisfaction of both parties.

Old Doctor Jabez lived at the foot of the present Bowen Street. Across the way was his “well-known Apothecary’s Shop just below the Church, at the

Sign of the Unicorn and Mortar." Benjamin Bowen and Benjamin Stelle offered for sale, in August, 1770, a full assortment of medicines, "Chymical and Galenical," as well as the chocolate with which they were wont to supply the Providence public, "by the Pound, Box, or Hundred-weight."

It was, however, several years previous to these developments in the career of Benjamin Stelle that David Howell received the letter from President Manning, already quoted. He accepted its suggestion, looked over the ground, and was shortly installed as tutor in the college at Warren. Thenceforth his interests and abilities were identified with his new home.

Within another twelvemonth the members of the class of 1769 increased from two to six, and by commencement day still another aspirant for academic honors had appeared in the person of James Mitchell Varnum, lately of Harvard. There is circumstantial evidence to warrant the assumption that this young man's career at the older institution of learning had not commended him to its college authorities. Be that as it may, he assuredly saw fit to spend the last year and a half of his college course at Warren. His later career as lawyer, major-general in the Revolutionary Army, and member of the Continental Congress covers the critical period of Rhode Island's history.

The first commencement exercises of Rhode Island

College were held in the meeting-house at Warren, on September 7, 1769, before an "Audience consisting of the principal Gentlemen and Ladies of this Colony, and many from the Neighbouring Governments." Although "large and crowded," this august assembly (we are told) "behaved with the utmost decorum." This encomium does not impress us as entirely gratuitous when we pause to remember that the commencement programme on "this auspicious day" (to quote the valedictorian) lasted from morn till dewy eve, being appropriately concluded with a sermon by the Reverend Morgan Edwards. Our pioneer student, young William Rogers, was well to the fore with an oration on "Benevolence," "in which," says the reporter for the *Gazette*, "among other pertinent Observations, he particularly noticed the Necessity which that Infant Seminary stands in for the Salutary Effects of that truly Christian Virtue."

The programme (to use our modern term) was a broadside of fifteen by nineteen inches, and contained in addition to the names of the chancellor, president, faculty, and members of the graduating class, the Latin Salutatory, and a Latin syllogistic dispute. This form of programme, with such variations in the Latin portion as could be obtained by a change of the subject of discourse, was used until 1795. In that year an "Order of Exercises" in English was substituted.

The first issue of the commencement broadside called especial attention to the fact that the names of the graduating class were printed in alphabetical order. This was a marked departure from the customs of Harvard and Yale, where the students had from early colonial days been seated in the order of precedence to which their social rank entitled them. The "placing" of a class in college under such conditions was a delicate matter, and the claims of disappointed, or slighted, students and their friends were no small addition to the burdens resting on the college authorities. Precedence in class carried with it the choice of rooms and the privilege of being served first at table.

Among the commencement announcements of 1769 was the appointment of Mr. Howell to be professor of natural philosophy. There is no intimation of any increase in his salary of £72 per annum. We have Professor Howell's own statement that he not only conducted the courses in natural philosophy, but also "endeavored to initiate my pupils in the rudiments of classical learning, and instill into their minds the elementary principles of law." Inasmuch as, three years later, the philosophical apparatus was enumerated as "a pair of globes, two microscopes, and an electrical machine," it would seem that the laboratory courses in that science were not exhaustive.

Public attention was now drawn to the question of

housing this "Seminary of Polite Learning," which had enforced its claims to consideration by educating and graduating a class of young men. In the words of that eminent Baptist, Morgan Edwards, "some began to hope, and many to fear, that the Institution would come to something and stand." Some eight hundred pounds had been already obtained from well-wishers in England and Ireland to erect a college building in Warren, but at this juncture of affairs "some who were unwilling it should be there, and some who were unwilling it should be anywhere . . . proposed that the County which should raise the most money should have the College."

Existing rivalries in trade and politics lent all their enthusiasm to this new competition. Newport and Providence strove to outdo one another, and at times it seemed as if a compromise on a third town—either Warren or East Greenwich—would be the outcome. After much consideration of many memorials, and careful balancing of pros and cons, it was decided that "the college edifice be at Providence." The contest aroused much bitterness of spirit. President Manning, when asked if it had raised up a new party in the government, replied with perfect truth, "it has warmed up the old ones something considerable." "Warmth" is a very mild term to apply to the red-hot rhetoric of the "Enemy to all Hypocrites," who worked off his pent-up agitation in a letter to the editor of the Newport *Mercury*,

wherein Manning is denominated "a wolf in sheep's clothing," and the proceedings of the final meeting are unequivocally stigmatized as "bribery and corruption."

In the first bitterness of disappointment steps were taken to establish a rival college at Newport. A charter was drawn up and passed the lower House, but for reasons which failed to become matters of record it was rejected in the upper House, where those astute politicians, Moses Brown and Daniel Jenckes, watched over the interests of the Providence electorate. A "Remonstrance" on the part of the Corporation effectually debarred the rival enterprise from finding favor in the eyes of the new Assembly.

It cannot be doubted that the college president was enthusiastically in favor of Providence, nor can we wonder that this centre of Baptist influence commended itself to him. While the selection of an abiding-place was yet pending, Manning urged his good brother in the faith, Nicholas Brown, to a step which he felt must clinch the matter. He says, "as I think you have the good of the College at heart more than they [the Newport party] it will stand you in hand to demonstrate this in the clearest light; and this you can do by proffering to build the College yourselves . . . Say nothing about the President's house; but consult how large a house you can build, and finish two stories with your own money, in as short a time as you can possibly accomplish it, and

engage to finish the rest as fast as wanted. . . . You can here make all the advantage yourselves, from lying handy to the materials; the whole weight of this will be thrown directly into your scale, and you can promise just as much more than they can, as the edifice can be erected cheaper with you than with them, and as you will prosecute it with more spirit and do the bargaining and work with less expense. Here, too, you will have the advantage of them, as you have made out bills of everything, and bespoke the materials and workmen, and push it immediately into execution.”<sup>1</sup>

We can hardly err in ascribing a certain amount of influence to this bit of lucid reasoning. Six weeks before a decision was reached as to the permanent situation of the college, namely, on December 29, 1769, Nicholas and Joseph Brown signed an agreement to advance to the treasurer of the college the sum of £3090, legal money, that being the amount of “a great Number of Subscriptions procured Signed but unpaid . . . the Abilitys of the Signers thereof being unknown to the Trustees and Fellows or the Treasurer”; but this munificence was of course conditional on the removal to Providence.

It was in May, 1770, that the corner-stone of University Hall was laid, and from that time forth the building went merrily forward under the shrewd management of Nicholas Brown and Company.

<sup>1</sup> Guild, *Doc. Hist. B. U.*, 195.



With that eye for practical detail which ever distinguishes the successful business man, Mr. Brown and his brothers watched the progress of the edifice destined to house the "infant Seminary," in whose success they felt so keen an interest.

Even before ground was broken for the new building, the removal of the college became an accomplished fact. The president and scholars took up their abode in Providence a few weeks after the decisive vote. The former was temporarily accommodated in the old Bowen house on the Towne Street, while the student body was dispersed among the townspeople, and boarded at the rate of \$1.25 a week. Recitations were conducted in the upper story of the brick schoolhouse on Meeting Street. The little group of perhaps a dozen and a half students soon settled down to academic routine, and by the November of 1771, they were provided with accommodations for lecture-rooms within the walls of the first college buildings.

It was at this date that Doctor Stiles recorded a visit to the college, "where five or six lower rooms are finished off. They have about twenty students, though none yet living in the College edifice." Since 1823 the "College edifice" has been known as University Hall. It was built after the model of Nassau Hall at Princeton, put up in 1756, and was regarded with admiration by the academic public of the colonies. Only two stories were put up at first in the

Providence building. In 1785, a third was added, and in 1788, the fourth.

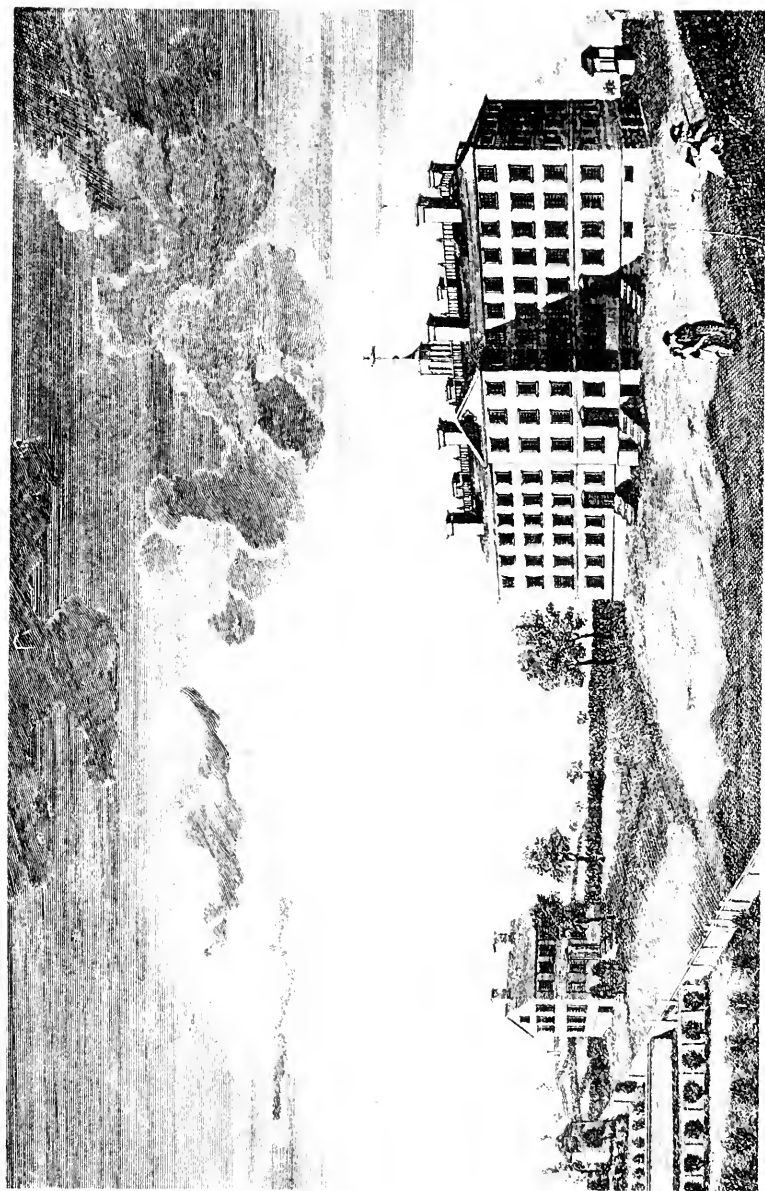
The lot selected for the college grounds was some eight acres in extent, situated at the top of the hill above the Towne Street, and running eastward toward the Seekonk River. The southern half of this property was part of the home lot of the "first-comer," Chad Brown. It was purchased by the college authorities from Chad Brown's great-great-grandsons, John and Moses Brown, for three hundred and thirty dollars. The northern half of the college grounds was purchased from Oliver Bowen (the son of Doctor Ephraim Bowen) for four hundred dollars.

"When the fixing of the College edifice here was firmly settled," writes Moses Brown to President Wayland in 1833, "our house, then composed of four brothers, viz., Nicholas, Joseph, John, and Moses Brown, concluded to take charge of building the necessary buildings, purchasing land for the same, etc." Records and balance-sheets are still in existence to prove the careful detail and elaborate precision with which each disbursement was laid out and accounted for. The postage of a letter to Philadelphia, a month's work "at the foundation," " $\frac{1}{2}$  gall. West India rum for the digging of the well," "seven squares glass in Mr. Snows meeting house, broke at Commencement," are entered side by side with a stated equivalent of pounds, shillings, and pence.

OLD VIEW OF THE FIRST COLLEGE BUILDING AND THE  
PRESIDENT'S HOUSE, ERECTED 1770

From an early engraving, made by S. Hill after a drawing by D. Leonard.







The first president's house was contemporary with "the College edifice." It stood about a hundred feet in front, and a little to the right, of the main building. In 1840, "a new and elegant mansion" for the use of the college executive was built across the street from the college yard, at the corner of College and Prospect Streets, and the old house entered on its downward career, literally as well as metaphorically. It was removed to a site on the north side of College Street, below Benefit, where its identity is well-nigh lost in that of the uninviting row of buildings.

For five years after the removal to Providence, commencements were held in the meeting-house of the worthy Mr. Joseph Snow, on the West Side of the river, and this for the excellent reason that no other building in town could accommodate the throngs of interested listeners.

Although the college was small and poor, it enjoyed the utmost respect and consideration at the hands of its fellow-townsmen. The commencement procession was invariably headed by the President and His Excellency the Governor. We are told that the effect was most impressive, that "Governor Wanton was the most dignified and respectable looking man ever seen," while "the white wig of President Manning was of the largest dimensions worn in this country."

By the beginning of 1772, Doctor Manning felt justified in writing to a friend in London as follows: "The College edifice is erected on a most beautiful

eminence, in the neighborhood of Providence, commanding a most charming and variegated prospect; a large, neat, brick building, and so far completed as to receive the students, who now reside there, the number of whom is twenty-two." The greatest needs were a library and a philosophical apparatus. "At present we have but about two hundred and fifty volumes, and these not well chosen, being such as our friends could best spare. . . . Our whole College fund consists of about £900 sterling, being the whole sum collected abroad, for no money collected without the colonies is made use of in the building, but solely applied in endowing it."

To the duties of college president and minister of the gospel, Doctor Manning united those of head master of the Latin School. This institution came from Warren with its founder and the college to Providence, where it filled a long-felt want, as is set forth in the following advertisement: —

Whereas several gentlemen have requested me to take and educate their sons, this may inform them, and others disposed to put their children under my care, that the Latin School is now . . . set up in the College edifice, where proper attention shall be given, by a master duly qualified, and those found to be the most effective methods to obtain a competent knowledge of grammar, steadily pursued. At the same time, spelling, reading, and speaking English with propriety will be particularly attended to. Any who choose their sons should board in commons, may be accommodated at



the same rate as the students, 6 shillings per week being the price. And I flatter myself that such attention will be paid to their learning and morals as will entirely satisfy all who may send their children. All books for the school, as well as the classical authors read in the College may be had at the lowest rate of the subscriber.

JAMES MANNING.

When we consider that at the date of this announcement (1772) Doctor Manning's salary as president was £67. 13. 4. plus a house and garden, to which his stipend as minister of the Baptist church added £50, it will be readily admitted that any revenue from the Latin School could hardly come amiss. The school's career was long and useful. In 1809, a new building was put up at the head of College Street for its accommodation, under the auspices of the college authorities. Its title was also renewed, and from that time until the closing years of the nineteenth century it held, as the University Grammar School, a creditable position in the academic ranks of New England.

An outline of the Latin School curriculum has just been quoted in the words of no less a person than its worthy founder. It will interest us to glance for a moment at the intellectual bill of fare offered by the college. Young Solomon Drowne, of Providence, matriculated in 1770. His later career has been touched upon in connection with the marriage records of the Russell family. He has left us in his diary

an account of some of his intellectual experiences as a freshman. In October, 1770, his studies began in Horace, Longinus, and Lucian; to these French was added in December. Under the date 1771, he writes: "Recited with the first class that recited in the new College Building. Commenced Geography in January; Xenophon in February; Watt's Logic in May; Ward's Oratory in June; Homer's Iliad in July; Duncan's Logic in August; Longinus in October; Hill's Arithmetic same month; Hammond's Algebra and British Grammar in December."

It seems that the days of vacation were too few and unimportant to justify their mention in this academic calendar.

By 1783, the spirit of revolution had made itself felt, and in the college laws of that year vacations were specifically provided for "From September 6th to October 20th; from December 24th to January 24th; and from the first Monday in May three weeks," leaving thirty-nine weeks of term-time to the scholars of that hale and hearty generation.

The second-year courses were in ethics, Euclid, metaphysics, trigonometry, Cicero, philosophy, use of the globes, and Hebrew grammar.

This modern Solomon graduated in 1773, the valedictorian of his class, fully impressed with the importance of the occasion. "At length the day, the great, the important day, is come," he writes. "O may it prove propitious. Now we must pass from

easy College duties into the busy, bustling scenes of life." The prophecy, as regarded his own future, was fairly accurate. An experience of four years as an army surgeon was eventually followed by twenty-three years of service as college professor, the greater part including the anarchic administration of President Asa Messer, when it may fairly be said that the bonds of discipline were burst asunder.

During Solomon Drowne's undergraduate days, however, the vigilance of the college authorities was unrelenting. Life outside the classroom was regulated to a degree that would seem to a student of the present day fairly preposterous. According to the "Laws and Customs of Rhode Island College," in 1774, students were required to attend both morning and evening prayers. The former were held at six in the summer, and at seven in the winter. Each student was also required "to attend public worship every First Day of the week steadily." No student could be out of his room after nine in the evening, nor was he then, nor at any other time, permitted to play "at cards or any unlawful games, swear, lie, steal, or get drunk . . . or attend at places of idle and vain sports." During the "hours of study" (from nine to twelve, from two to sunset, and from seven to nine) no language save Latin might be spoken in the college edifice, or the college yard.

Freshmen were called upon "to kindle a fire seasonably before morning prayers." The body of the

underclassmen were recommended to the especial care of the seniors, who had authority to detain offenders after evening prayers, "and there admonish them . . . correct and instruct them in their general deportment in such minute particulars of a genteel carriage and good breeding, as does not come within any express written laws of the College," while "the delinquents" are bidden to receive the same "with modesty and submission, and punctually observe."

For commons the boys seem to have received a bountiful supply of good substantial food, agreeable to the specifications carefully stipulated and drawn up by no less august a body than the corporation. Twice a week the dinners were of salt meat, either beef or pork, "with peas, beans, greens, roots, etc., and puddings." Fresh meat — either roasted, baked, boiled, or fried, with vegetables — was served twice a week. One dinner was to consist of "soup and fragments," one of "boiled fresh meat with a proper sauce or broth," and one "of salt or fresh fish with brown bread. For drink, good small beer or cider." For breakfast, tea or coffee was served with white bread, or toasted brown bread, and butter. But if chocolate or milk porridge was selected to drink, then no butter was served with the bread. Suppers consisted of "Milk with hasty pudding, rice, samp, white bread, etc. Or milk porridge, chocolate, tea, coffee, as for breakfast."

It was further provided that "the several articles

VIEW OF THE FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

Corner of Benefit and Benevolent Streets, erected 1795,  
destroyed by fire, 1814. From an old engraving by  
William Hamlin.









and provisions . . . be diversified and changed as to their succession through the week, . . . with the addition of puddings, apple pies, dumplings, cheese, etc., to be interspersed . . . as often as may be convenient and suitable." For this table one dollar a week was charged.

In 1774, amid ominous mutterings from the war-clouds of the Revolution fast gathering on the political horizon, the last commencement in "Mr. Snow's meeting house" was held. The temper of the times was shown by the presence in the procession of the "Company of Cadets in uniforms, who," says the *Gazette*, "made an elegant and truly military appearance, and both in the procession and manœuvres, which they performed on the College Green, procured universal approbation, and convinced the spectators, that Americans are no less capable of military discipline than Europeans."

After 1774, the well-known First Baptist Meeting-House, at the foot of Waterman Street, was available for commencement exercises.

Since this religious society had been under the ministrations of President Manning it had grown apace. When his ministry began, in 1770, the church had a membership of one hundred and eighteen. The early Baptists were opposed on principle to the payment of money for religious ministrations, and James Manning was the first Baptist minister in Providence to receive a salary. In his case it may

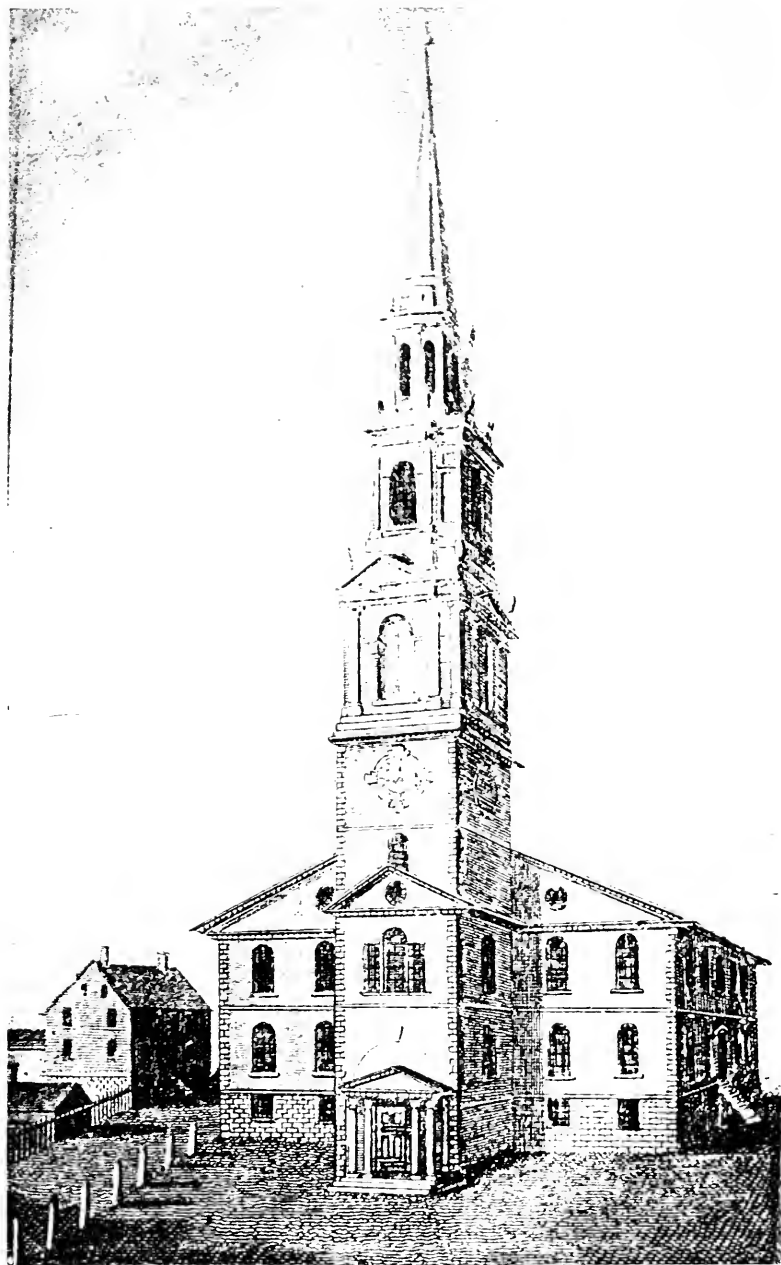
surely be affirmed that the servant proved worthy of his hire. It is true that the obnoxious fact of his "holding to singing in public worship" hopelessly discredited him in the eyes of the ultra-conservative element of his congregation, and his lax views respecting the "laying on of hands" led the advocates of a stricter theology to withdraw from the society. Nevertheless his efforts were rewarded, within a few years' time, by a revival which nearly doubled the membership of the church. Its members were raised to a total so imposing that it at once became evident to every one that the little meeting-house on the Towne Street was quite outgrown. The more substantial and public-spirited Baptists took counsel together, and embodied the results of their cogitations in a resolution to the following effect: "That we will all heartily unite as one man in all lawful ways and means . . . to attend to and revive the affair of building a meeting house for the public worship of Almighty God, and also for holding Commencement in."

According to an ancient and honorable tradition, the lot selected for the new meeting-house was then an orchard belonging to John Angell, who is credited with being the last of the Gortonists, and who at all events was no admirer of the Baptist theology. It was felt, and doubtless with reason, that Mr. Angell would be violently opposed to selling his property as a site for a Baptist meeting-house. In this dilemma

VIEW OF THE FIRST BAPTIST MEETING-HOUSE,  
ERECTED 1775

From an engraving first printed in the *Massachusetts  
Magazine* for August, 1789, and engraved by S. Hill.







the guile of the serpent was resorted to, and with success. Good William Russell, a pillar of the Episcopal Church, admired and trusted by all who knew him, was induced to negotiate the purchase as if for himself, and then to convey the lot to the Baptists.

A lottery was then put before the public, in order to raise funds, and tickets were sent to the neighboring towns to be disposed of among friends of the college and the Baptist society. Nicholas Brown wrote to Benjamin Mason, at Newport, enclosing "A Scheem for a Lottery for Building a Meeting-house designed to Accomodate Publick Commencements and is to be Built strong and Convenient for the purpose . . . the Ladies that have a Taste for such Exebetions will be much Accomodated in the Safety of their Persons, as well as Elegence and Convenience of the Building for the purpose designed . . . pray feel round amongst yr. friends and those to the Cause and let us know how Many [tickets] you Can dispose of and they shall be sent."

The tickets were divided into six classes, with prices ranging from five to two and one half dollars. The "cheerful assistance and encouragement of the public" was solicited through the columns of the *Gazette*, as well as by personal correspondence, and eventually some seven thousand dollars were secured.

Meanwhile a committee of two, namely, Joseph Brown and Jonathan Hammond, were instructed to

go to Boston "as soon as may be to view the different churches and meeting houses there, and to make a memorandum of their several dimensions and forms of architecture." Joseph Brown has long been given the position of chief architect, together with the honor attaching to a really creditable piece of work. His claim has been questioned, but since the matter at issue is after all one of adaptation and not of original design, the game would not seem to be worth any great expenditure of powder and shot. The model for the new meeting-house is acknowledged to be St. Martin's-in-the-Fields, in London, a church designed by James Gibbs, a noted follower of Sir Christopher Wren.

The total cost of the lot and meeting-house is estimated by the historian of Brown University to have been twenty-five thousand dollars. "When we consider the scarcity of money in those days," says Guild, "the dangers of the impending war with the mother country, and also the fact that Providence was a small town, containing a population of four thousand three hundred and twenty-one, we are amazed at the energy, enterprise, and skill which could successfully complete so great an undertaking." Good Doctor Guild's pious satisfaction in this monument to the public spirit of the eighteenth-century Providence would have been changed to incredulity not unmingled with contempt could he have seen his fellow-townsmen of the twentieth cen-



ture preparing to hand over the old First Church, its spacious yard and beautiful elms, to the tender mercies of a railway corporation in the interest of what are called better transportation facilities. The episode of Esau and his birthright has been played on many a sordid stage since the days of Jacob and his brothers, but seldom without better justification than in the present instance.

Ground was broken for the new meeting-house early in the summer of 1774. Stiles says, writing under date of October 6, "Viewed the Frame of a large Baptist Meetinghouse in Providence 80 feet square raised last Month; this to be the Baptist Cathedral for America." The frame was advertised to be raised on August 29, when "all Carpenters and others who are willing to assist" were "desired to attend on such Days as shall be most convenient for them, for which they will receive the Thanks of the Committee." The house was opened for public worship on Sunday, May 25, 1775, when President Manning preached the dedicatory sermon.

The building attracted attention throughout the American colonies, and soon became one of the "sights," to be included in the itinerary of all tourists, whether foreign or domestic. Almost precisely one year from the day on which Doctor Stiles was privileged "to view the Frame," he records in his diary the interesting fact that he has "viewed the new Baptist Meetinghouse." He pronounces it "the

most superb and costly Edifice of the Kind in New England," and describes it as "highly ornamented, tho' with mixt Architecture meant to be after the Doric Order: it has," he concludes, "a most lofty Steeple." The architectural ornamentation, thus critically mentioned, must refer to the pillars supporting the gallery of the church. These may with some plausibility be described as "meant to be after the Doric Order." It may be said no less truly of the exterior that its architectural adornments are "mixt." Doric pillars support the porch covering the front entrance, while in mid-air a truly marvellous combination of square columns with would-be Ionic capitals forms the lower and supporting story of the steeple proper.

The final additions to the new building were felt to give the last touch of dignity and decorum. A bell and a clock were imported from England. The latter, after holding for many years without a rival the proud position of town-clock, was brought down from its high estate to adorn a humbler field of labor on the spire of a mission church nearby.

The bell has been several times recast. It originally bore the following inscription:—

For freedom of conscience the town was first planted.  
Persuasion, not force, was used by the people.  
This church is the oldest, and has not recanted,  
Enjoying and granting bell, temple, and steeple.

Steeple and bells were forbidden to the dissenting

chapels of the mother-country, and it was no doubt a comforting thought for the pious colonial dissenter that in outward pomp of circumstance his meeting-house compared favorably with King's Church, a little further up the street, or even with Old Trinity, at Newport.

In 1792, Nicholas Brown the younger — the son of our old friend Nicholas, who has figured so frequently in these pages — gave two thousand dollars to provide a lot and parsonage; and in the same year his sister, Hope Brown, gave the crystal chandelier. Tradition tells us that this was first lighted on the evening of her wedding. Whatever may be involved in that statement, it is doubtful if even tradition would incur the responsibility of asserting that the wedding so celebrated took place within the illuminated meeting-house. So great a departure from the standard of decorum prevailing in the Baptist societies would certainly not have been sanctioned by the family of the conservative Nicholas Brown, who might well have served his fellow-townsmen as a pattern of dignified conventionality.

In 1834, the historic interest of the building was sadly diminished by a remodelling of the interior. The high pulpit with its sounding-board, and the square pews were banished, no doubt in response to the demand for greater seating capacity.



## Chapter X

PROVIDENCE HOUSES, 1785-1830

AFTER the war of the Revolution, Providence entered on an era of great prosperity. This was brought about by her shipping-trade, and especially by the trade with China and the East Indies. Great wealth was brought into the town, and the foremost ship-owners and merchants lived in a way of corresponding luxury. They built houses of stately dignity, with large, square, high-studded rooms, and walls that defy even the New-England east wind, and their beautiful woodwork still serves us as a model for decoration.<sup>1</sup>

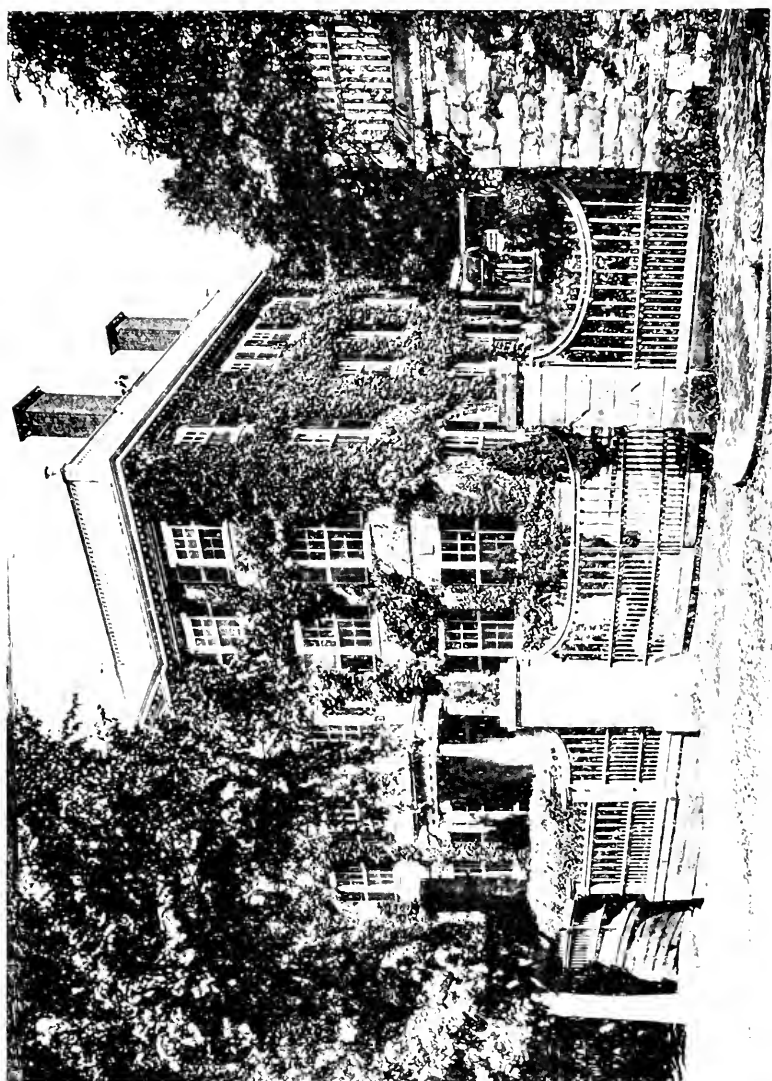
One of the best examples in New England of this type of architecture is the house built by John Brown on Power Street, in 1786. It is now Number 52 Power Street. In the following year John Brown sent the first ship from the port of Providence to the East Indies. This was the *General Washington*. John Brown was a great admirer of Washington. When he built the first Washington Bridge over Providence River, close to his new wharves and docks, he placed a wooden statue of his favorite hero on the new bridge, and gave it its present name. His house

<sup>1</sup> Dow, *American Renaissance Houses in Bristol*.

JOHN BROWN HOUSE, POWER STREET

Now owned by Marsden J. Perry. Erected 1786, and referred to by John Quincy Adams in 1789 as "the most magnificent and elegant private mansion that I have ever seen on this continent." From a photograph, 1911, by Willis A. Dean.









on Power Street was designed by his brother, Joseph Brown. Joseph was a man of scholarly, rather than commercial aptitudes. He is said to have lent a hand in designing the First Baptist Church. He also worked on the design of the Old Market House at the foot of College Street, now known as the Board of Trade. This building was put up in 1773. It was originally of two stories. The windows in the ground floor now take the place of the market-stalls. In 1797, permission was given to the Order of Free Masons, to which almost every man of wealth and social consideration in town belonged, to add a third story. This was to be held as their own property.

Besides these buildings, Joseph Brown designed his own home at 72 South Main Street, a little south of College Hill. It is a beautiful old house, now occupied by the Providence Bank. The doorway was originally on the level of the second story, and was reached by a long flight of steps from either side of the central landing. The street floor was used for shops. The house was built in 1774. Joseph Brown was an astronomer and physicist, as well as architect. For some time he held the position of professor of experimental philosophy at Rhode Island College.

Another wealthy merchant, named Joseph Nightingale, built the house, Number 354 Benefit Street, at the corner of Power Street. This dates from 1791. It and the John Brown house across Power Street were the two most costly residences of the Providence

of that day. The Nightingale house is now known as the John Carter Brown house, having been sold to the Browns by Mr. Nightingale's heirs.

Farther up the street, at the corner of Power and Brown Streets, is the house built by Thomas Poynton Ives, in 1816. Thomas Ives came to Providence from Beverly, Massachusetts, when he was thirteen years old, as an apprentice for the shipping firm of Nicholas Brown and Company. His abilities commended him not only to his employer, but to his employer's daughter as well, and in 1792 he married Hope Brown, in whose honor Hope College was named some thirty years later. From an apprentice young Ives rose by appropriate stages to a partnership. The name of the firm then became Brown and Ives, by which it has ever since been known. The old counting-house of Brown and Ives is Number 50 South Main Street, and is still used by their descendants for office purposes.

In the good old days the bales and packages were brought on board ship to the wharf, or slip, just across the street, and hoisted from the decks to the windows of the loft, over which still depends the heavy iron ring where once the ropes were made fast.

From the upper windows of Thomas Ives's new house on Power Street he could overlook the beautiful garden of his neighbor Edward Carrington, whose mansion on Williams Street, built in 1813, had been for three years the admiration of all Providence.

It is Number 66 Williams Street, and is still owned and occupied by the Carrington family.

At the other end of the hill, on Prospect Street, a little beyond Barnes Street, lived one of the leading lights of Providence social circles — Colonel Thomas Lloyd Halsey. In 1801, his house on South Main Street was destroyed by fire, and he then built the large brick house with swell fronts, which stands on the west side of Prospect Street, on the crest of the hill. It has been atrociously modified by so-called improvements within the last five or six years. The Halsey farm extended to Hope Street and included the site of the present reservoir.

The old Halsey mansion boasts not only a well-developed ghost, — a piano-playing ghost! — but also a fine large bloodstain, which cannot be scrubbed from the floor, but which does not appear to all observers. It eludes those investigators who are prompted by a vain curiosity, or by a desire to gather statistics of psychological phenomena; but to those whose minds are free from prejudice and whose hearts are truly sympathetic it never fails to appear. For many years the negroes living in the neighborhood objected to passing the place after dark, and while it stood empty (as it did for long periods) not one of them could have been induced to enter it. Tales were current of a piano played for hours at a time within the empty house, in that uncanny interval between midnight and daybreak.

Another old house is that built probably by Ebenezer Knight Dexter in 1796. It originally stood facing George Street on part of the lot where Rhode Island Hall stands to-day. When this lot became the property of the college, the Dexter house was moved across the campus to Waterman Street. It is now owned and occupied by Doctor Day.

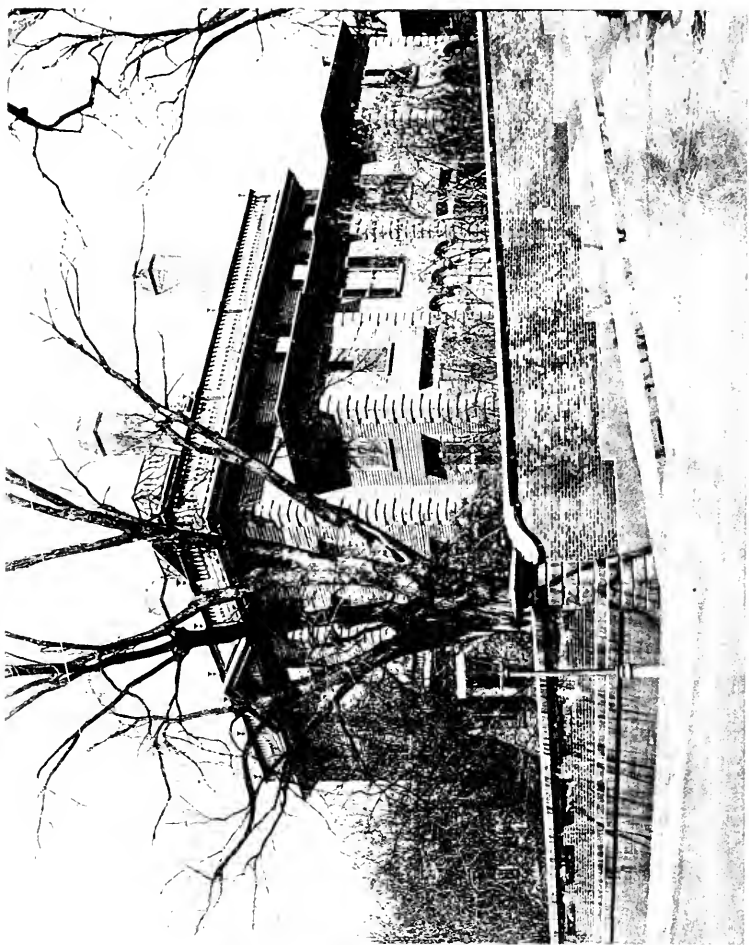
At about the same time, Ebenezer Knight Dexter also built the house on Benefit Street which stands over the opening of the tunnel. This was that Ebenezer Knight Dexter who gave the Dexter Asylum to the city of Providence.

Another interesting house on Benefit Street is the Sullivan Dorr House, Number 109, built on the model of Pope's villa at Twickenham. Sullivan Dorr was father of Thomas W. Dorr, the hero and victim of the Dorr War in 1842, which gained manhood suffrage for the State of Rhode Island. The Sullivan Dorr house has a remarkably beautiful staircase. Its mural decorations are probably unique among Rhode Island houses. They extend around the upper and lower halls, and the drawing-room, above the low wainscoting, and are the work of a Neapolitan artist, who visited Providence in 1810. Their scope is wide. Among them are Italian landscapes, one with Vesuvius and one with a ruined castle conspicuous in the foreground. There are also scenes of a less exalted nature, — one of a farmhouse and yard, in which some recent restorer of the realistic school was

### JOSEPH NIGHTINGALE HOUSE

Benefit Street, erected by Joseph Nightingale about 1791. It was sold in 1814 to Nicholas Brown and for many years was the home of the John Carter Brown Library — the finest existing collection of books relating to the early history of America. From a photograph taken in 1902.









moved to paint the clothes-line with all its weekly burden of household linen. I am sorry to say that this crowning touch was not permitted to remain.

At the corner of Benefit and College Streets, we have the quarters of the Handicraft Club. This delightful old house was built by Truman Beckwith in 1820. His family deplored his selection of a site thus remote from the centre of civilization. "Well," said his brother-in-law, "I can't see why Truman wants to build up there in the lots!"

Ebenezer Knight Dexter also built the house at the head of Cooke Street, on Angell Street, known today as the Diman house. The house was sold by Mr. Dexter, and changed owners twice after that before it became the property of Alexander Jones, in 1811. Mr. Jones was a former resident and merchant of Charleston, South Carolina, and a graduate of Brown University in the class of 1801. He called the place Bellevue. The better to enjoy this view he had the roof built to a square, where were seats and a balustrade, from which on a clear day Newport, at the end of Narragansett Bay, could easily be seen.

Alexander Jones lived there until 1837. His son, George F. Jones, has given a little account of life in Providence when he was a young man. The town had then a population of about eleven thousand. There were but four houses, of which the Jones house was one, between the College building and the Seekonk River, to the east. Mr. Jones tells us that in 1825

or 1826, his father, who had been to Boston and Salem, purchased at the latter place and brought home the first pair of India-rubber overshoes that were seen in Providence. They were about a third of an inch thick, hard, stiff, and unyielding, and it was necessary to warm them thoroughly before they could be put on. One only wonders how they were ever taken off again!

Among other graphic reminiscences is that of the introduction of anthracite coal. The pioneer was a certain Mr. Wood, who had a grate put up in the parlor of his house on Waterman Street, and issued an invitation to the public to come and see the "black stones" burn. The general astonishment was unbounded, and some incredulous citizens made a second visit to assure themselves that it was not all a dream.

In those days churches were not heated. In St. John's a wood fire was made in a large stove in the vestry-room on Sunday mornings, and there the boys and girls were wont to gather with the family foot-stoves, which were filled with live coals of oak and walnut, and carried into the frigid pews for the purpose of stimulating religious enthusiasm.

The march of improvement was slow out of doors, as well as indoors. Pavements were not generally laid down until late in the eighteenth century. They were of large round stones, and the sidewalk (when it was anything but a mere bank of earth) was of the

### SULLIVAN DORR HOUSE

Corner of Benefit and Bowen Streets, built early in the last century and designed by John H. Greene. It was long the residence of Thomas W. Dorr, whose efforts to reform the suffrage in Rhode Island brought about the Dorr War. From a photograph taken about 1870.







same material. Through the middle of the street ran a long line of stones of larger size than the others. These were called, "the crown of the causeway." Along this narrow path ladies, and people who were more than usually careful for the safety of their clothes, picked their way in wet weather.

Until 1820, people whose business or pleasure took them abroad after dark guided their steps over the uneven walks by means of hand-lanterns. In 1820, for the first time, the streets were lighted at the expense of the town.

In those days the fashionable shopping-district was Cheapside, a name given to the west side of North Main Street from Market Square northward for perhaps four or five blocks. There, in 1805, the firm of B. H. Gladding Company (then Watson and Gladding) began its career at the "Sign of the Bunch of Grapes," and there the business was carried on until 1880. The original sign is in the cabinet of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

In 1828, the Arcade was built on Westminster Street, showing that the town's business centre was shifting to the West Side of the river. It is said that the Madeleine, in Paris, was the stimulus for erecting the six or seven "Arcades" that appeared in various parts of the United States about this time. Of these, the Providence Arcade is the only one now standing. The pillars have been said to be the largest monoliths in America, with the exception of those in the Cathe-

dral of St. John the Divine. The pediment on the Westminster Street end is triangular, while that on Weybosset Street is rectangular, in shape. This variety of decoration is due to a difference of taste on the part of the two architects, who thus compromised their difficulties. The Arcade was, in its day, considered a triumphal combination of elegance and utility. Under one roof, sheltered from wind and rain, purchasers found wherewithal to clothe themselves, from bonnets to rubber overshoes. It was the advance guard of the modern department store.

In those days communication with the outside world was well provided for. In 1817, when President Monroe visited Providence, he landed from a small government steamer, called the *Firefly*. This was a tremendous innovation, but before many years had passed the Providence and New York steamboats were famous throughout the Atlantic seaboard. When, in 1823, the steamer *Fulton* succeeded in making the voyage within twenty-four hours it was heralded in the newspapers from Maine to Georgia as the latest wonder in rapid transit.

Those were the piping days of stage-coach travel. In the summer of 1829 there were three hundred and twenty-eight stage-coaches a week running between Boston and Providence, besides many local stages to points nearer the city.

Occasional sightseers came to Providence, as to other towns. Some of these put their impressions

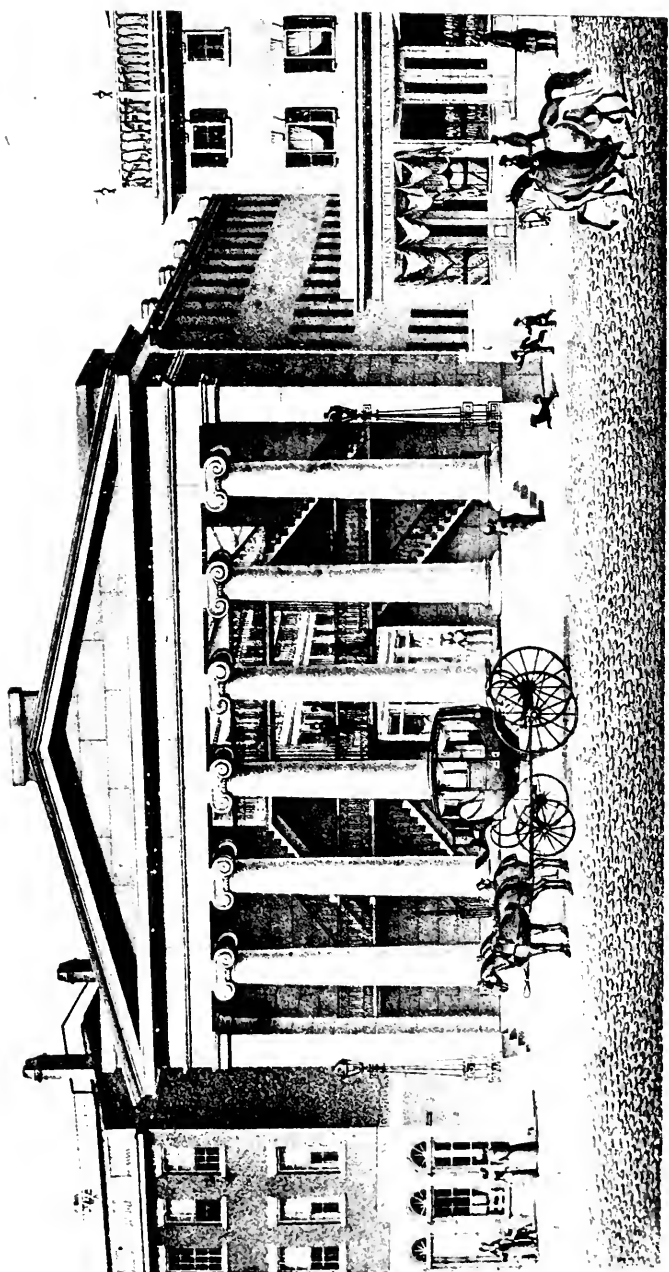


## THE ARCADE

Built 1827-28; for many years after its construction one of the chief objects of interest to visitors. From an old lithograph in the Rhode Island Historical Society.

There is a

... of ... ..  
... ..  
... ..





into print, and among them was Mrs. Anne Royal, of Virginia, who wrote in 1826:—

Providence is a very romantic town, lying partly on two hills, and partly on a narrow plain, about wide enough for two streets. . . . It contains fourteen houses for public worship, a college, a jail, a theatre, a market-house, eight banks, an alms-house, part of which is a hospital, and 12,800 inhabitants. . . . Providence is mostly built of wood, though there are many fine brick edifices in it. . . . The streets are wide and regular, and most of them paved, with handsome sidewalks, planted with trees. It is a very flourishing, beautiful town, and carries on an extensive trade with the East Indies. The town of Providence owns six cotton factories, two woollen factories, twelve jeweller's shops, where jewelry is manufactured for exportation. . . . The citizens are mostly men of extensive capital. . . . I made several attempts to see Brown University, but was finally disappointed. I called several times at the house of the President, but never found him in. The buildings . . . are not extraordinary, either for size or architecture. . . . I am told it is well endowed, has a president and ten professors, and averages 150 students. . . . The citizens of Providence are mild, unassuming, artless, and the very milk of human kindness. They are genteel, but not so refined as the people of Boston. . . . They are stout, fine looking men; the ladies, particularly, are handsome, and many of them highly accomplished. Both sexes . . . have a very independent carriage.

THE END





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